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LETTERS

WRITTEN FROM

COLOMBIA,

DURING

A JOURNEY

84864

FROM

CARACAS TO BOGOTÁ,

AND THENCE TO

SANTA MARTHA,

IN

1823.

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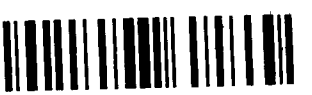
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J. Haddon, Printer, Castle Street, Finsbury.

PREFACE

THE writer of the following Letters puts them forth with no other pretension than that of giving a faithful account of what he had the opportunity of observing on his journey.

Pretending to neither literary talent, nor scientific attainment, he would not, however, have considered mere accuracy of observation a sufficient apology for the publication, but for the want so universally felt in Great Britain of information as to the actual condition of the Republic of Colombia.

The more that rich and beautiful country becomes known, the greater will be the in-

terest excited towards it among all Europeans. So extensive a field for the exercise of European industry and intelligence has not for ages presented itself. Nature discloses, on all sides, inexhaustible treasures, both of the mineral and vegetable kingdoms;—the skill and labour of man are alone wanting to draw them forth. The variety of soil and climate affords scope for every species of production, and enables the stranger to choose those which may suit his constitution and pursuits. The scene on all sides is, in short, abundantly inviting; and the traveller, in passing through the country, sees such extensive capabilities—so much scope for improvement, that he hardly knows which object he ought to take up first.

The suffering caused by the Revolution has been excessive—the desolation extreme. Both mark, in a manner highly honourable to the Colombians, the undeviating constancy with which, for fourteen years, they have persevered in a struggle,—not of faction against legitimate authority, but of lawful right against unlawful

oppression. It is, perhaps, not generally known in this country, that the original conquerors of Spanish America established solemn treaties between the inhabitants of those nations, and the crown of Spain; by which the former became subject to the Spanish crown, but with certain provisions and stipulations, calculated to secure to them particular rights and privileges. These treaties were wholly disregarded, and trampled under foot by the Spanish Government. Remonstrance after remonstrance was made to the Court of Madrid. They were mocked at, and despised. A greater example of patient and enduring loyalty, than that exhibited for three centuries by the Colonies of Spain, history does not furnish. It was not sufficient that the greatest political privations were inflicted on the inhabitants;—they were even prohibited from cultivating some of the most valuable fruits of the earth. The vine and the olive-tree were forbidden plants throughout all Spanish America. And why? That the wine and the oil of the *mother* country might alone be consumed by the

Colonists. In short; a more absurd system of misrule—a more heartless, selfish tyranny, than that exercised by Spain over its transmarine possessions, the world has no example of. With so docile a people, any thing like a moderately liberal system of government would have secured these valuable countries to Spain for ever. She has now irrevocably lost them,—not by the rebellion of discontent against the restraints of rational government, but by her own infraction of the most solemn and inalienable engagements. A few years of peace will shew how much the interests of humanity at large have benefited by the change.

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COLOMBIA,

Humboldt

LETTERS,

&c.

CARACAS, 21st February, 1823.

My former letter will have put you in possession of the narrative of a most favourable voyage from Falmouth, of thirty-three days; I therefore resume my Journal from the

11*th Feb. near La Guayra.* How grand and magnificent a sight is now before us! The splendid coast of Terra Firma rises in lofty majesty, till its towering mountains are lost to view in the fleecy clouds that envelop their summits. How novel and sublime a prospect the first opening of this fine country to an European! its very aspect bespeaks independence! We are coasting along at the distance of a few miles; the mountains, which rise abruptly from the verge of the sea to a stupendous height, are completely clothed in verdure,

by superfluous clothing; the children have none at all. The commerce carried on with La Guayra is considerable, and is daily increasing, with the English and North Americans. During my short stay I visited a pretty little village on the sea coast, at the distance of a mile, called Maiquetia. It is characterized by a fine grove of cocoa-nut trees, which, I believe, thrive best near the sea-shore. It is an elegant tree, growing to the height of fifty or sixty feet, the top of the stem being crowned with about fifty leaves from ten to fifteen feet long, with nuts in clusters of about a dozen each hanging from it. The houses here are constructed in a manner to exclude heat as much as possible, and admit the sea breezes, which set in from ten in the morning until sun-set. They have generally a court in the centre, surrounded by an open terrace, which communicates with the respective apartments. The rooms are lofty, and for the most part tiled instead of boarded; which, in a hot climate is pleasant, for every other reason, than that it generates fleas most abundantly.

13th Feb. This morning I had an opportunity of seeing a little of the wild aspect of the country round La Guayra, in seeking for a fit

spot to bathe in; a small rivulet descending from the mountains at the back of the town, and forming occasional pits, is frequented for this purpose. The scenery is grand and striking, but just as nature formed it, unaided by art or cultivation. The mountains, rising to a towering height, lose their summits in the clouds; many fine ravines are formed, clothed in wood; and the stream, falling from one steep to another, is occasionally seen through the openings. Several birds of curious plumage frequent these solitudes, but I did not observe any that were particularly beautiful.

Humboldt speaks of the yellow fever as prevailing at La Guayra; if it was known there in his time, it has disappeared since, for there is no trace of it at present. An English physician directed his enquiries particularly to this point, during a short stay at La Guayra and Caracas, but could no where meet with, or hear of the yellow fever.

Having dispatched the cavalcade of baggage mules to Caracas, I took leave of La Guayra at three o'clock, and commenced the steep ascent which is cut in a zig-zag form up the mountain. The road is so rough and precipitous, that it

surprizes one how so much traffic can be carried on with the interior. It was long before La Guayra began sensibly to recede from our view; but by dint of perseverance we reached "La Venta," the half-way house, in three hours. Nothing can exceed the grandeur of the scenery while winding up this immense steep. The mountains are generally wooded, excepting only in a few spots where they have been cleared to give place to "Tierras" of maize, plaintains, coffee, &c.; and words cannot convey an adequate idea of the majestic beauty of the view from the Venta, which has already been most justly celebrated:—

"This spot does indeed, when the clouds permit, present a magnificent view of the sea and the neighbouring coast. You discover an horizon of more than twenty-two leagues radius; the white shore reflects a dazzling mass of light, and you see at your feet Cape Blanco, the village of Maiquetia with its cocoa trees, La Guayra, and the vessels lying at anchor in the port. But this view is far more extraordinary when the sky is not serene, and trains of clouds strongly illumined on their upper surface seem projected, like floating

islands, on the surface of the ocean. Strata of vapour, hovering at different heights, then form intermediary spaces between the eye and the lower regions. From an illusion easily explained, they enlarge the scene, and render it more extraordinary. Trees and dwellings discover themselves from time to time, through the openings which are left by the clouds driven on by the winds, and rolling over one another. Objects then appear at a greater depth than when seen through a purer and more serene air."

According to Humboldt's computation this spot is 3,600 feet above the level of the sea, and the difference of temperature between it and La Guayra is very striking. From hence to the summit of the mountain, which I reached at sun-set, is a distance of two miles, and thence to La Guayra is computed at eleven, which it took me four hours to perform. The descent to the vale of Caracas is seven more. The view of that city from hence, I am informed, is one of the grandest sights imaginable, and I have to regret that the advance of evening deprived me of the enjoyment of it. It was eight o'clock when I passed the city gates, descending by the Calle (street) de Carabobo, a complete picture of desolation—that part of Caracas nearest to the

mountain presenting a continued mass of ruins. For the full space of a mile the streets were overgrown with weeds, and entirely uninhabited. Such are the remains of the violent earthquake of 1812!

20*th Feb.* I regret that full employment during my short stay in the second capital of Colombia prevents my giving a very detailed account of its peculiarities. It is situated in a valley, about four leagues in extent, running east and west, and surrounded by the immense chain of mountains which border the sea from Coro to Cumaná; the only regularity observable in the town is the direction of the streets, which run at right angles; the principal square is called the Placa Mayor, where the market is held; it is built without any symmetry or order, and surrounded by small shops which are any thing but ornamental. The cathedral occupies the eastern side. The houses of Caracas, once so rich in the costliness of their furniture and decorations, can now barely boast the commonest articles of convenience, and it is with the utmost difficulty that a table, chair, or bedstead, can at present be procured. The cathedral is neither remarkable for its architectural regularity or taste; on the contrary, one is surprized to see in the capital where the Roman Catholic

religion is, or rather was, so honored, an edifice that does not correspond more with the former size and importance of this city; the interior is divided by four rows of pillars at equal distances, consequently the nave has only the width of the aisles; the principal altar, instead of being detached, is fixed to the wall, and notwithstanding the gaudiness of ornament, and a certain degree of grandeur, as respects the size and general effect, the several parts will not bear scrutiny. Depons informs us, that in 1641, a plan was laid for a superb structure, but when, in the commencement of the work, a severe shock of an earthquake arrested its progress; it was then decided that solidity should take the lead of magnificence, and such is the character of the present building, which indeed its age bespeaks, having stood nearly two centuries, braving the repeated shocks of earthquakes, and above all, the overwhelming calamity of 1812, which has laid more than half the town in ruins.

The early settlers in Spanish America had more difficulty in conquering the district of Caracas than any other on the main, for within a circumference of ten or twelve leagues there were upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand Indians, governed by more than thirty Caciques: after desperate resistance they were at length

conquered by Don Diego Losada, who founded the city in 1567. During our stay here the climate was most delightful, the maximum of heat not exceeding 75°, and the mornings and evenings sufficiently cool to make additional clothing agreeable. Fruits of various kinds are very abundant and delicious. A beautiful panorama of the vale and town of Caracas, might be taken from the ruins of an old hospital, situated on a gentle rise near the foot of the Silla.

This vale, formerly so celebrated for its great fertility and the value of its productions, is now, with the exception of a few Haciendas,* much neglected; but it would be unfair from this circumstance to judge of the people's disposition to industry, for in no part of the Republic are they more distinguished for agricultural activity; the cause may very justly be assigned to the desolating and long protracted war, in which they have struggled for, and at length obtained their independence.

My next letter will probably give some account of our progress towards Bogotá: as a favourable opportunity presents itself of forwarding this to Europe, I will not detain it for further particulars.

* Estates.

TOCUYO, 27th March.

I intend to be faithful to my promise by informing you from time to time of our progress —the aspect of the country—its inhabitants—manners—customs—and general state of affairs. Although I feel and lament my incompetency to delineate these objects with the force they deserve, to convey any thing like an adequate idea of the grandeur and sublimity of the scenery—general fertility of the soil—its productions, spontaneous, and such as result from cultivation—both for want of the necessary information, and from my very recent acquaintance with this quarter of the globe, I will endeavour to impart to you what little I have acquired by observation, resuming my journal from the period of our leaving Caracas. I must, however, prepare you to expect many repetitions, for as all definitions of the same thing have a tendency to resemblance, so the descriptions of country, which frequently occur, must always bear in a degree that similarity to each other which they have generally to their object.

22*d Feb.* After a stay of ten days at Caracas the object of our detention being satisfactorily arranged, we took leave of our friends at five in the afternoon, equipped with every requi-

site and convenience for the journey to Bogotá, the capital of the Republic, from hence a distance computed at 1,200 miles!

The only method of travelling in this country being on mules, the best were provided that Caracas afforded. —— accompanying us a few miles on our route, formed with the three travelling companions, and like number of servants, a larger cavalcade than had departed hence for some time. Tocuyo was fixed upon as the place of rendezvous, where the arriero in charge of our effects was to join us.

The evening as usual, was delightfully mild and serene; by sun-set we had gained the summit of an eminence from whence the retrospect of the city is extremely fine, backed by its lofty Cordillera, or range of Andean mountains, in the centre of which the Silla (so named from a dip between its east and west extremity, which gives it the shape of a saddle,) was eminently conspicuous: on the left of the road, situated in a delightful valley, and half enclosed by wooded heights, the first object of much interest that presented itself was a sugar plantation, belonging to a rich merchant of Caracas. The transparent tints of the cane, its romantic situation, the river Guayra winding through the plantation,

together with a variety of trees peculiar to the western hemisphere, forming altogether a scene of deep interest. Our friend left us at the village of Antimoné, and we pursued our route through the vale of Caracas, once so celebrated for its richness and fertility, now in a state of comparative abandonment, but not less interesting from the noble struggle whence it has proceeded: the moon shone with uncommon splendour to illumine this scene of novel and peculiar beauty; on each side the road mountains rose to a great height, apparently meeting the brilliant stars that twinkled on their summits; the murmuring Guayra still accompanying us. Such a scene, softened by a most delicious temperature—the stillness of the evening, interrupted only by the progress of the river and chirruping of crickets—was truly astonishing.

At eight o'clock we stopped at a small village, called "Las Juntas" (from the junction of several streams,) to give time for the arrival of the baggage, our sable cook, a most important personage, having already fallen in the rear. We waited three hours in expectation of his arrival, when it became too late to proceed; the hammocks were therefore slung under a shed in the Palperia, a method of rest to me so unusual that I

had little sleep, and was startled before it was light by the crowing of a fighting cock close at my ears. These animals are customary inhabitants in all Palperias throughout the country. A messenger who had been dispatched after the cook returned without any tidings of him.

23*rd Feb. Sunday.* We mounted at six, and quitting the plain of Caracas, began to ascend the mountains which separate it from the valleys of Aragon—here the river Guayra takes its source, and the country at every turn presents objects for encreasing admiration; the road was steep, but our animals being such as conquer all difficulties, we were soon enclosed by this branch of the Andes, which you must picture to yourself as the grandest of scenery; indeed, on such a scale, that I am at a loss to give you any idea of it. The mountains are covered with the very richest verdure, and spontaneous natural ornaments. Trees and shrubs of such variety and exquisite beauty, as quite astonish the inexperienced mind of a European, and render every step of the deepest interest; a new object presents itself at every winding, and the attention is kept in a state of constant excitement by the magnificence of the changes. The richness of the verdure is not the least source of astonishment and admiration

in a tropical climate, where one expects to see vegetation parched and burnt by a vertical sun; here, on the contrary, it luxuriates in the greatest possible freshness; the climate is delicious, owing to the rarity of the air at so great an elevation. *In fact, nature seems full,* spreading her gifts with an abundant hand in the midst of a perpetual Spring! The road lay occasionally through beautifully verdant avenues; it would then open to a panoramic view of the sea, of mountains that encompassed us, with here and there an inconsiderable spot of cultivation.

Having passed "Buena vista," an eminence which describes its meaning, I must lead you on to the village of San Pedro, a distance of four leagues, which we performed before breakfast. Its site, in a small valley, is very romantic; but the place itself is inconsiderable, consisting only of a few hovels, amongst which we found a Pulperia. It being Sunday, the inhabitants had assembled to witness a cock fight, a diversion peculiar to the day, and a very favorite amusement throughout the country. There were no less than four combatants in each corner of the room where our hammocks were placed, whose constant music interrupted our mid-day slumbers.

At two, we again mounted and commenced a steep ascent, the road still winding through a grand and naturally rich country, abounding in a variety of beautiful shrubs and wild flowers, such as in Europe would excite the greatest admiration. We dined at a place called Las Alajas, commandingly situated on this summit, the highest point of the Cordillera. For our dinner, consisting only of a few eggs and a piece of lean pork dried in the sun, with a bottle of bad Catalonian wine, our simple mountain host would have charged us the moderate sum of seven dollars, the half of which he ultimately received with evident glee. The distance hence to Las Coquises (named after a species of aloe, which grows in great abundance in its vicinity) is three leagues; but by such a steep descent, and so bad a road, resembling more the bed of a mountain torrent, than the principal communication in the country, that it was late ere we reached it. The "Posadero"* was gone to bed, and it required all our persuasion, accompanied by liberal promises, to induce him to open the door—one of the fraternity having been maltreated by travellers a few nights before; however he made ample amends for our detention, by setting before us an excellent supper; and was in himself so complete an original, as highly

* Innkeeper.

to entertain us. It would indeed be difficult to find a better personification of Sancho than "Coetano Rios;" the following are specimens of his poetry, as inscribed on the walls of the Posada:

Todo el que traiga Dinero,
Entre à tratar con este Ventéro.

Companeros! Hoy no' se fia aqui,
Manana Si!

Vayan Entrando; Vayan Comiendo;
Vayan pagando y Vayan Saliendo.

Ye who have pockets full, may enter here;
The host shall welcome—and ne'er doubt your cheer.

Traveller, no trust is given here to-day,
We'll trust to-morrow, if to-day you pay.

Pray enter here, eat, drink your fill,
Merry depart—but pay your bill!

This is the first village in the plains of Aragua, so celebrated for their valuable productions and fertility. At ten o'clock we again proceeded, and had a most delightful ride to Consejo, two leagues distant. The moon shone with great splendour when we left the Posada, and followed the course of a small river, the Tuy. On our right the plain was cultivated with sugar cane,

maize, and plantain, for about half a mile, when it terminated suddenly in high mountains richly wooded. On the opposite bank, they rose abruptly from the stream, the whole forming a view of great beauty in so soft a light. We found it expedient to take advantage of the moon-light nights as much as possible; they certainly tend to enhance the rich effect of such scenery. The same difficulty again occurred in gaining admittance here; and it was past twelve when we "turned in," after a long day's journey.

24*th Feb.* In the last village there is nothing worthy of remark; like most others consisting of only a few cottages or huts, which are extremely poor and miserable; but the country now opening upon us, is as much noted for its luxuriant richness, as the lofty Cordillera for its magnificence. The valleys are generally the most productive, on account of the equal distribution of heat and moisture; the plains being more exposed to the heat of the sun, are in general extensive pasturages—those of Aragua are considerable, the eye nevertheless encompasses the boundary of mountains that enclose them. This tract is more abundantly favoured by nature, than any I have hitherto seen—its produce consisting of cocoa, coffee, sugar, indigo,

maize, cotton, plantain, and all kinds of fruits. The land is completely intersected with rivulets, and the attention is constantly attracted by a variety of birds of the most brilliant plumage, from the commencement of the vale.

At La Victoria we only stopped to see the church, formerly of great beauty and grandeur, but its day has now gone by. This place was founded by the Missionaries; and from a small village, inhabited only by a few Indians, has risen to a very considerable town. It has many good houses, and the remains of others, that were destroyed by the overwhelming calamity that desolated Caracas and other cities in the Republic. In 1804, its population amounted to 7800—now probably not a third of the number, from the Earthquake and the Revolution. Here, for the first time, we began to feel inconvenience from the heat: it became rather oppressive ere we reached San Mattéo, a small village with a tolerably good Posada, taking its name from an hacienda of considerable extent and richness, belonging to Bolivar, at the entrance. It is one of the largest in the country, consisting principally of sugar-cane plantations. Notwithstanding the quantity of sugar that is grown in Venezuela, but little (and I am not aware if any) is exported, owing to the amazing con-

sumption at home; large quantities are consumed in making "Guarapo," the common beverage of the lower order; it consists simply of sugar and water, which is made to undergo the vinous fermentation, after which it possesses intoxicating qualities. A great deal of "popelon" is eaten by the common people, either *with* or *instead* of bread—this is sugar in its first state, before the treacle is extracted. Preserves and sweetmeats are in very general use by all classes, and are another great means of consumption The plant requires a warm climate, rich soil, and abundance of water; according to the degree of heat it is from nine to sixteen months in ripening—it is then cut down and sent to the mill, the upper part of each cane being reserved for re-planting. When cut, it is immediately carried to the press, and thence the juice to the boilers; if left only a short time a fermentation would take place, that would greatly destroy the saccharine qualities; the process of refining follows, which is not carried to half the perfection in which it is done in England, or is it at all to be compared to the Brazilian sugar. If I am not mistaken, a decisive battle was fought in the neighbourhood of this place.

On opening my best thermometer to ascertain the temperature of this place, the hottest

we have yet come to, I was truly grieved to find it broken, owing I suppose to the roughness of the carriage; the loss is irreparable, my smaller one having been broken in coming from La Guayra. We remained here during the heat of the day, reposing in our hammocks, which indeed we find necessary, to make up for short nights. The continuation of to-day's journey is, if possible, more beautiful than the commencement of the Vale. A large Hacienda, belonging to Don F. Tovar, in particular, exceeds in exuberance of rich foliage and umbrageous coffee and cocoa plantations, any thing of the kind I have yet seen. Between seven and eight we reached the large village of Maracay—a march of five leagues. This place is regularly built, and contains a number of large houses, which are sufficiently commodious and solid, the greater number being of stone; most of them have gardens attached, a custom little known in this country, probably on account of the extreme indolence of the people—this circumstance alone justifies the character for industry which is usually given to the inhabitants of this village. According to the custom of the country we sought lodging in a private house, the ladies of which received us with the usual good nature and hospitality that are invariably shewn to travellers, amusing us moreover by

singing national airs, although in a style that cannot be much extolled. We were visited here by two young naturalists, who were sent out by Mr. Zea, forming part of an Academy of Science, which he was preparing the foundation of, for the general improvement of the country. It appears that their researches have been attended with success, both in Botany and Mineralogy, during their short progress. When at Caracas, they ascended the Silla, an undertaking of some difficulty and danger, and were successful in discovering the *Milk Tree*, described by Humboldt; the liquid that is extracted from it exactly resembles milk; so strong is the affinity, that upon analization it proved to contain the same animal properties. They intend proceeding further with their researches.

The renowned General Paez with all his staff passed us this evening—a man as remarkable for courage, as he has been eminently successful in his country's cause; he is second to none but Bolivar in the regeneration of this part of America, and is as much esteemed by his troops, as feared by the enemy; he generally travels with considerable pomp, accompanied by a numerous staff. This place may be considered within the limits of the blockading army of

Puerto Cabello, and has somewhat the appearance of military rule. We were glad to swing our hammocks in the open air, the night being very close.

25th Feb. At four in the morning we began making preparations for our departure "en route," favoured by the moon and freshness of the morning air. We reached the borders of the beautiful Lake of Valencia, just as the moon was retiring behind the mountains, which bound it on the West. At the same time, the sun rising in dazzling splendour from the fertile vale, gilded its placid waters with the most delicate tints. Situated in a charming valley—surrounded by mountains of the richest and most agreeable vegetation—studded as it is with numerous and picturesque islands, adorned by the freshest verdure—I thought, as we traced the road which winds round the Lake, that it was one of the most exquisite sights imaginable. This scene is compared by travellers to the Lake of Geneva, which it is said much to resemble. In its greatest length it is about forty-two miles, and twelve in breadth, and nearly twenty different rivers are said to fall into it; notwithstanding which, without having any outlet, the waters do not encrease—their non-accumulation is conjectured to arise from

some subterraneous exit, as it would be impossible for evaporation alone to consume the influx.

At Fort Cabrera, built on an eminence, formerly an Island, on the borders of the Lake, we should have been stopped to shew our passports, which were improvidently left with the baggage, had not our friend —— fortunately been acquainted with the Commandant, who allowed us to pass. The richness of the foliage, and delicious perfume exhaled from various odoriferous shrubs, was very agreeable, together with the freshness of the morning; but as we advanced towards the Condillera, the country became more arid. At half-past eight we reached San Joachin, a distance of six leagues, having passed a fine Hacienda of Cocoa. Here we remained till four in the afternoon in consequence of the heat, and were well taken care of by the Posadera and her daughters, who were rather superior and agreeable lasses. A letter was hence dispatched by —— to a particular friend of his at Valencia, Don Fernando Penalver, to apprize him of our approach, and intention to rest a day at his house. We followed at four, and had a very cool and pleasant ride of five leagues, passing the village of Guacára, where we met Don Francisco, a brother of the Marquis Toro,

also an old friend of his. It was eight when we entered Valencia, and no sooner were we housed, than a tremendous storm came on; the rain fell in torrents for three hours in a manner peculiar to this hemisphere.

Valencia, situated in a large plain, a little to the west of the lake, is a large town, the next in size to Caracas, and at present the head quarters of the army investing Puerto Cavello. There are about two thousand troops here, and amongst them most of the English that have survived the different campaigns. The entrance to the town is by a good bridge of three arches, built of stone and brick, and described as the best by far of any in the Republic. The "Glorieta" attached to it, is a large circular seat, enclosing an area, where the inhabitants meet in the evening for dancing and festivity. This is, in fact, the only public promenade. Of the few benefits bestowed on the country, by the Spaniards, this is one. The bridge and Glorieta were erected by Morales, not many years since. The town contains many large houses, the best of which are occupied by the military: a greater number are in ruins, presenting a further memento of the ravages committed by the earthquake. The population is not, how-

ever, proportioned to its present size. In this, as well as in respect to its resources, the prolonged and harassing war has left behind it, most melancholy memorials. Valencia has an appearance of antiquity: I believe it was founded in 1555, by Alonso Dias Moreno.

26*th Feb.* General Paez, the commander in chief, arrived at eight in the morning, from Maracay, a distance of forty miles. It is his usual custom, when travelling, to start at midnight, to prevent his movements being known. He is described as a most active man, courteous in his manners to foreigners, and in his person quite the beau. No officer in the service has so good or so large a stud; he is, consequently, always extremely well mounted. His vigilance in the blockade of Puerto Cavello is very great; notwithstanding which, the partisans of the old system, many of whom have taken refuge in Curacoa, contrive occasionally to introduce succours to the besieged. It is not many days since a brig from the island, laden with provisions, evaded the vigilance of the Commodore, and got into the port. But for this assistance, it was thought the garrison could not have held out many days, being much straitened. It is, I am informed, naturally the strongest, and the best fortified

town on the coast, and its occupation by the enemy is a serious loss to the country, being the principal *entrepôt* for the commerce of this part of Venezuela. The town is described as being very unhealthy as soon as the rains set in, when the stagnant waters in the marshes with which it is encompassed, that have been putrefying during the hot months, being set in motion, the exhalations cause fever of a most malignant kind, particularly destructive to Europeans. When the port is liberated, Valencia will probably become a place of much commerce. The distance between the two is only six or seven leagues, and the communication is facilitated by a good road. Independently of the stimulus to cultivation offered by its vicinity to so good a port, Valencia enjoys a great fertility of soil and a warm climate; it is necessarily the medium for imports and exports to and from the valleys of Aragua, St. Carlos, Tocuyo, Barquisimeto, &c., comprising the richest district of Venezuela. A great stagnation to trade is at present caused by the difficulty of transport; the growers having to send their produce from the above districts overland to Caracas, at a very considerable expense

General Paez sent for —— this morning, and

gave him, in addition to General Soublette's recommendatory letter, one that will ensure to us the aid and assistance of every "*bon Colombiano,*" should we stand in need of it on the route. There is, probably, no man in the Republic whose wishes would be more particularly attended to, his valour having made him universally respected.

During our stay in Valencia, Mr. —— read us a most interesting letter which he had received from Bolivar. It was quite a friendly and private communication; and the more valuable, as shewing the unreserved opinions of the writer. Its principal object was, to be informed of the state of affairs in Venezuela; in all probability previous to the President's making up his mind as to going to the assistance of Peru; taking at the same time a glance at the moral and political condition of the several republics of South America. The sentiments it contains are not only those of a true patriot, but bear all the impression of a noble and generous mind, ardent in his country's cause for her benefit alone, in which his whole soul seemed to be engrossed. With a spirit of prophecy highly creditable to his judgment as a statesman, he laments, in the liveliest terms, the evil that must accrue to Mexico from the ambition of Iturbide,

and speaks of the time as arrived, when, in the Western Hemisphere, despotism *must* bow before *public opinion;* in fact, from its ingenuous expressions—the nature of the communication—to one of his oldest friends and active coadjutors in the regeneration of America—a man who is looked upon as one of its ablest senators—nothing could have been more interesting to us than the opportunity of perusing such a document. The mind of the illustrious writer shone forth in every line, and excited in us a degree of admiration and respect for his character, that I know not how to describe.

In addition to the above, I should not omit a slight sketch of our hospitable host. His conversation is that of an intelligent and enlightened mind—one who has profited by his communication with the world, and dismissed prejudices that are natural to the American character. His having been President of the first National Congress, bespeaks the estimation in which he is held by his countrymen; in addition to which, although our acquaintance was but short, I am sure I do not overrate his merits in describing him as a very amiable man, and one who would be received in any society with respect and consideration. He is living at present in a very quiet way, although pos-

sessing one of the finest estates in the country; but it having suffered much during the war, he very wisely appropriates all his disposable means to its restoration, when he will probably receive from it fifty or sixty thousand dollars a year; a very considerable fortune in a country where luxuries are but little known, or indeed (what in England would be considered) the common conveniences of life. Few of his countrymen, whose property is in like manner deteriorated, possess the same prudence.

27*th Feb.* We left Valencia between eight and nine in the morning, accompanied a few miles by our worthy host; here we obtained an addition to our studs of three fine saddle mules, making eight animals for our own use, independently of those for the servants and baggage; so that with the first recommendations in the country, the friendship and respect that all the leading men entertain for ——, who indeed has rendered them important services, this supply cannot fail to diminish very considerably the difficulties and inconveniences of this long journey, in a country so devastated by war, and deprived of the usual accommodations that travellers stand in need of. We arrived at Tocuyito in the middle of the day, after an almost suffocating ride of three leagues across a savannah, in which there

is nothing worthy of observation excepting the natural luxuriance of the herbage; the approach was the more grateful, the village being prettily situated in the midst of Haciendas and green foliage. We were particularly fortunate in meeting with some ladies of ——'s acquaintance, one of whom was the most obliging, lively, and amiable Colombianá that I have yet seen; the best of every thing that the house afforded was immediately in requisition for us, and while dinner was preparing, we were regaled with delicious fruits, and moreover had the luxury of a cold bath in the shade of a coffee plantation adjoining the house. Here, in fact, we experienced to its full extent the hospitality for which Valencia and its neighbourhood are so distinguished, and it was with regret we took leave of our kind friends at three o'clock, pursuing our route along the road by which the Spaniards retreated after their signal defeat at Carabobó, first to Valencia, and thence to Puerto Cavello, to which spot they have since been confined. We reached the field of battle just before dusk, but unfortunately, not in time to see the respective positions. The Spaniards were pursued with considerable slaughter by the victors through Tocuyito to Valencia, and on to Puerto Cavello. By the road side, and scattered over the

plain, we observed the remains of many of the unfortunate Godos (Goths, the name by which the Spaniards are usually recognized by the patriots,) who were killed in the retreat. After quitting the plain, the road became very precipitous and romantic, either winding along the side of mountains, or descending into deep dells, in the bottom of each a stream or rivulet was invariably found. The moon had not yet risen, and but few stars were occasionally visible through the thick foliage that towers above the deep ravines, to relieve the darkness of the descent. At the bottom myriads of fire flies and other luminous insects which floated on the surface of the water, tended only to make the gloom more apparent, which, accompanied by the hoarse croaking of toads, hissing of serpents, and chirruping of crickets, formed altogether quite a scene of romance. In the steepness of the ascent from these occasional ravines, our sumpter mule twice broke down, and at one moment (being blind of one eye,) was as nearly as possible precipitated down a steep, which would at once have eased us of him and the effects. After repeated disasters such as the above, the led mules getting astray (and all *without* embellishment,) we at length, at eleven o'clock, reached a hovel, called "El Hayo," a distance of six leagues from Tocuyito; the

animals, as well as ourselves, completely tired. We, therefore, with some difficulty persuaded the inhabitants—a half-starved Indian woman, and a young girl—to open the door, and receive our canteens, saddles, &c.; the animals being fastened to a cane fence, while the servants went upon a forage. The Indian woman in the mean time made a fire, and prepared our chocolate (which, by the bye, proves a great resource in this land of bad living.) Could you have seen us seated on blocks round the embers, sipping our repast out of Indian *calabashes*, our two dingy attendants hardly knowing what to make of us, in the back-ground the stud tied round the small enclosure, you would have thought it an amusing groupe. The hammocks were slung in the small place which served us as our kitchen, but from the dampness of the atmosphere in this low spot, our slumbers were neither sound or refreshing, and we were glad to move as soon as the morning dawned.

Feb. 28*th.* Hence to Tinaquillo, a distance of four leagues, there is nothing remarkable in the route, excepting that the roads are good; indeed, since descending into the valleys of Aragua, with very few exceptions, there would be no impediment to carriage conveyance, either

for the purposes of agriculture or of commerce. The various and beautiful plumage of the birds here is very remarkable, the commonest amongst them would be considered curiosities in Europe, while there are many of exceeding beauty. The mocking-bird builds its nest in an ingenious manner, to protect it from the depredations of the destructive vermin which abound so much in this country; it is suspended from extremities of the branches, and is often from one to two feet in length, and very curiously bound together. Parrots and parroquets are very abundant, and make a great chattering, as they fly about in large flocks. The cardinal is another beautiful bird, entirely scarlet; the tropical, equally pretty, and much esteemed; the most abundant is a small dove, which is perfectly tame; there are others of a larger kind and fine plumage. We have shot several macaws, the colours of which are exceedingly brilliant. Indeed, if facilities of conveyance and preservation offered, one might make a very interesting zoological collection. There is also a fine bird, called the "Guacharaca," very like our pheasant, and somewhat similar in flavour; they are plentiful in the plains, and are easily shot.

The approach to Tinaquillo is extremely pretty, on account of the freshness of the verdure,

and its pleasing contrast to the monotonous savannahs we have lately passed. In the village, however, there is nothing worth recording; the houses are straggling and as poor looking as the inhabitants, who are reduced to few in number. Indeed, in every place we have yet passed through, the war has decreased the population to the lowest ebb; there was a tolerable Pulperia, where we breakfasted, and took an early dinner, resuming our march between three and four o'clock. The position of Tinaco you will perhaps not find even in a good map, but it may be considered midway between Valencia and Barquesimeto. The ride here in the cool of the evening was extremely pleasant and varied, partaking much of the wild and romantic scenery we passed last night; the moon rose at nine, rendering the latter part of our journey doubly agreeable. It was eleven o'clock before we entered Tinaco, and then had some difficulty in procuring lodging for ourselves and beasts, through the cook's stupidity, who had been sent forward purposely to secure them. To effect this, it is only necessary to forward General Paez's letter to the Alcalde, and quarters are always provided. It was our intention to start hence for San Carlos, at four in the morning, but we were not off till sun-rise, having overslept ourselves, notwithstanding the same shed served

for us and the mules—trifles that *we* travellers become accustomed to; indeed, this occurrence is generally a source of mirth rather than vexation.

Tinaco is a large village, but having entered it so late, and left it at day-break, I cannot *conscientiously* attempt a description of its peculiarities.

1*st March*. The ride to San Carlos was extremely sultry, it being near ten o'clock before we were lodged. The approach is by far the most interesting of any town we have seen; there is a good deal of cultivation in its immediate vicinity, the produce being of that luxuriant kind, which invariably characterises and rewards industry in this favoured land. The "annil," or indigo, is amongst the richest of its vegetation. "This valuable plant was first cul-"tivated in Venezuela in 1774; the attempt "being ridiculed at the time, but in the result "it proved a rival to that of Guatimala, the "price of which had always till then been 80 "per cent. above that of any other part of the "globe." The spot where it is chiefly raised is the valley of Aragua, where it has increased with amazing rapidity and success. It requires a light soil, hot climate, and but little moisture.

To extract the indigo the greatest degree of care and experience is necessary. The plant is first mixed with water; in this state it undergoes a fermentation to a particular extent; it is then boiled, and the blue is precipitated; after which it is dried in the sun, and formed into cakes for use.

As you approach the town several white steeples, and the remains of large edifices, are visible above the rich foliage, as well as some mementos of the same tremendous visitation of which we have found so many traces in Venezuela. On the north it is bounded by the lofty Cordillera, which stretches along the coast from Coro to Cumana, as singular in its appearance as it is an essential provision of nature against the encroachments of the sea, which would otherwise, in all probability, inundate the immense expanse of Savannah, or "Llano's," which extend as far as the Orinoco, constituting (or rather have done so, for they are now comparatively ruined,) the great source of the riches of this province from the amazing quantity of horned cattle, horses, and mules that have been raised in them. To the south, these plains are some hundred miles in extent. We were quartered in one of the best houses in the town, exhibiting in its gilded mouldings, the remains of former riches. Its principal inhabitants are now bats and spiders.

The owner, Don Andres Herrera, a name distinguished amongst the conquerors of the New World, was one of the richest men of the place, but is now reduced to comparative poverty, from the depredations of one party, and the necessary exactions of the other, for the support of their cause. The resources of this town were formerly immense, indeed, I am told, almost incredible, as there were individuals possessing wealth beyond their power of computation, from the amazing and incalculable increase in cattle, the principal source of their prosperity; but a most destructive warfare has proved that the spring was not inexhaustible. There now barely remains a sufficiency for the common purposes of freight and conveyance; and unless timely measures be adopted to replenish the breeding stock, the country will sustain a most serious loss in the extinction of this branch of traffic. There are several churches in San Carlos, of neat and rather elegant exterior, one of which was built at the sole expence of an individual of the town. Some large houses have withstood the earthquake, more are in ruins, as well as the greater part of the town; but should the time arrive, when the government or individuals may be enabled to rebuild or renovate this place, it may be made one of the prettiest towns in the province. The principal objection

to it as a residence, is the excessive heat which prevails. During our stay, the glass was at 96, a heat beyond any we have yet experienced. At times I understand it is much higher. The oranges grown here are considered by the natives to be the best in the world; they are excellent, but not, in my opinion, equal to European fruit. The population is computed at five or six thousand, including probably the adjacent villages. To avoid as much as possible the heat of the day, as well as to ensure to our animals better fare than they have lately had, we did not leave till one the following morning.

2nd March, (Sunday.) Passing through "San José," about a league from the town, we reached *La Ceva*, another small hamlet, at five leagues distance, by sun-rise, where we took our chocolate, and proceeded without loss of time. This tract consists principally of savannah, which is susceptible of the highest cultivation: a proof of it is to be found in the great vigour of the herbage, watered by numerous rivulets, which continually intersect the plains. The situation of the Pulperia, where we refreshed ourselves, was such as would be envied in the most favoured spots in Europe. On the north, for about a mile, there was a rich flat, capable of producing all that nature requires, backed by a range of low but

picturesque hills, a scattering of wood succeeded, beyond which rose a range of lofty mountains. It is painful to see such favoured spots entirely neglected, possessing as they do, a climate and soil that only require the seed to be scattered on the surface, to produce in three or four months a most abundant harvest. Having a long day before us, we pushed on at six o'clock, the country increasing in variety and interest. Now, in confined vallies, invariably watered by a small stream as clear as chrystal, succeeded by undulating hills, which produce spontaneously a variety of beautiful shrubs, occasionally a few trees are seen, such as I imagine from their size and beautiful foliage, are to be met with only in the western hemisphere; in fact, it was quite park-like scenery, enlivened by numerous birds of the most brilliant plumage, with wild deer browsing at a distance on the verdant hillocks.

The sun became very powerful ere we reached *Caramacat*, a straggling Indian village, of miserable appearance, at the distance of ten leagues from San Carlos, which I made eleven by missing the road: the mule being completely fagged, I remained a little in the rear, and took a wrong path, but fortunately fell in with an Indian,

from whom I learnt my mistake. We took up our residence here at the house of the Alcalde, or chief magistrate; but when I use this term I must caution you against forming too high a notion of his importance, for these dignitaries usually keep their Pulperias, exercising at the same time uncontrolled authority over their respective towns or villages. While the Alcalde prepared our breakfast he did not consider it derogatory to attend to the cattle! The aspect of this place is that of perfect poverty, and the lowest degree of civilization, for a country that lays claim to its possession. However, we had nothing to object to our host —a little squat man, his head shorn of all its covering but a single curl, which fell in plaits over his forehead; for in his double capacity of Chief Magistrate and Pulpero, he did not scruple to lay aside the forms of office, and to provide us a meal, if not the most luxurious, the best the place afforded. It being thought desirable that we should push on a little further before night, having a very high mountain to pass, called "Montana del Altar;" we left Caramacal at four o'clock, immediately penetrating into the thick wood that skirts the village, and amongst which there are trees of majestic growth. We met an Indian family, the men armed with large

bows and arrows, and the whole groupe so consonant with the position and solitude of the place, that it gave one the idea of being transported amongst the wild aborigines of America. Having traversed it about a league, we were stopped in our progress by a rapid river (Cogedes), which it was necessary to pass to regain the road. A canoe was moored on the opposite bank, but we could not with all our efforts make ourselves heard by the ferry-man. —— and myself who were foremost, attempted to ford, but we soon found ourselves floating down with the stream, and were very glad to regain the shore, at the expence of a complete ducking. —— in coming up had observed a practicable part higher up, where we effected a passage, and thence proceeded to the ascent, which satisfied us of the expediency of having pushed on for this part before dark. As a precipitous and difficult pass, it exceeds any thing we have yet encountered! Another league brought us to a miserable Pulperia, where we proposed passing the night, after a long march of *thirteen* leagues. All we could obtain for refreshment was "Guarapo," (the liquor I have before mentioned as being extracted from sugar, neither unpleasant nor unwholesome) and cassava bread, made from the yaca plant, which also produces arrow-root; this is the common sustenance of the Indians. Our animals were reduced to feed upon the *thatch* of the Pulperia.

March 3rd. At two in the morning we were again on the move, to benefit by the moon, and to avoid as much as possible the burning sun. We had now passed the steepest of the ascent, the road was nevertheless quite of a novel character, and differing from any thing I have before seen. I can only assimilate it to what my fancy has painted "Vallambrosa," or the more imaginary gloom of the enchanted Forest in "La Gierusalemme Liberata." Although the moon shone with great splendour, this dark pass was impervious to her rays, from the height and close texture of the intwining branches—even the sun's beams never penetrate them; hence the cause of marshy spots, which in the rainy season are often impassable. We rode for miles in almost total obscurity—the trifling light that entered, being just sufficient to shew the gigantic size, and great variety of trees with which the forest was composed; amongst them were a great many palms of beautiful growth and uncommon height, probably from eighty to one hundred feet, the rugged pathway frequently obstructed by some that had fallen from age or tempest; the knowledge of the existence of wild beasts in so retired a spot, gave additional novelty and romance to this grand, but gloomy scene!

At two leagues from the place whence we started, we emerged from the darkness of "El Altar," at a place called "Boca del Montana," arriving at day-break at Cugisita, an inconsiderable village—the knapsack being ransacked and the mules fed, we proceeded another four leagues, to La Morita, a small and scattered hamlet. The road hither being much diversified with hill and dale, and park like scenery, from one or two eminences commands rich views, of a tract but little cultivated. On our left, was a very extensive range of mountains running north and south. The place itself deserves no other mention, than to record the extreme poverty and wretched "accommodation" of the miserable Pulperia. Having rested during the heat of the day, we were again in march at three o'clock, passing through a tract of country highly gifted with the spontaneous productions of so favoured a climate. It was dusk when we entered Augare, a village of very considerable extent, neat in appearance, and evidently containing a redundant population—the only place, in fact, where the inhabitants have appeared at all adequate to the number of buildings. This is satisfactorily accounted for in the extensive and valuable haciendas of indigo, cocoa, and sugar cane, in the Vale eastward of the range of mountains I before

mentioned, which is abundantly watered by the river Cogedes, and various minor streams, tending to enrich to an amazing extent a soil, already abundantly prolific. We were much mortified at passing through this luxuriant Vale, which is of considerable extent, at dusk, when we could not enjoy its beauties—especially as this is the season when the crops are in the highest perfection. We had to ford the river Cogedes five or six times ere we reached the ascent that leads to Barquesimeto, and it was eight o'clock before we obtained quarters, in consequence of the remnants of this town being filled with refugees from Coro, and the borders of the Lake of Maracaibo, who have fled before the marauding bands of Morales. The house of the curate was assigned to us, and we were received by him with the courtesy and hospitality for which his *Cloth* are celebrated throughout the Republic—a distinction must be made between the monks and the parish priests—the former are almost proscribed, while the latter constitute not only a useful, but very patriotic class of citizens. This was another long day's journey of twelve leagues.

Barquesimeto and its environs are supposed to contain a population of between eight and ten thousand persons, by far the greater portion

inhabiting the villages—the town is but a remnant of what it was formerly. In no part of the province of Venezuela has the earthquake committed such appalling ravages as in this ill-fated place—not even in Caracas, a great part of which withstood the shock, but here, I am told scarcely a house remained entire; and of its comparatively small population 1500 inhabitants were buried in the ruins! The inhabited part is now comparatively small, having been built since the awful visitation from the materials that abound in every direction, and still its fallen edifices present a mournful picture of desolation. The town is situated at the extremity of an extensive table mountain, which is again enclosed by still higher eminences (the fertile valleys intervening), hence probably the cause of the severity of the shock. Situated on this Plateau it has the benefit of constant breezes, which cool in a degree its excessively hot climate. This town is fifteen years older than Caracas, having been founded in 1552, by a Spaniard named Villegas.

March 4th. It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the 4th, before we thanked the hospitable Curate for his attentions, and again were on the road—passed a small and miserable place called Seritos Blancos; descending from whence we

reached Los Horcones at seven o'clock—three leagues from Barquesimeto.

At half-past two, as soon as the moon rose, we left Los Horcones, and traversed an uninteresting and arid tract, where the only vegetation consists in abundance of the prickly pear (the tree of which grows to a large size, and in most fantastic shapes), aloes, and a species of dwarf cedar. We arrived at Chibor to an early breakfast. Here again we found a great many emigrants from Coro, &c. who had fled with part of their property rather than risk the whole under the rapacity of Morales and his followers. The village is rather considerable, and presents many symptoms of regeneration. Houses are being repaired—others rising from their ruins, but all on a small scale—a neat church has also lately been erected. Being anxious to reach the first place of rest, both for ourselves and animals, who in fact are much more wearied than we are, we left Chibor at nine o'clock, the country assuming the same aspect as above, consequently but of little interest, till by descending a winding ravine, we found ourselves enclosed on all sides by mountains. The sun here became very powerful, and by the time we entered Tocuyo, the heat was excessive! Here we shall remain until the bulk of our

luggage, which is left in charge of an Arriero, arrives from Caracas. My next letter will probably be dated from the City of Merida.

MERIDA, March 22, 1823.

I NOW enter on the second division of our journey—namely, from Tocuyo to Merida, both in the province of Venezuela, which you are aware, no doubt, derived its name from several villages built on piles in the Lake of Maracaibo, which according to Robertson, bore a resemblance to Venice, hence the above name meaning *little Venice*, afterwards extending itself to the whole province.

The town of Tocuyo was founded as far back as the year 1545, by an agent of the Welser's Company, to whom Venezuela had been ceded by Spain; but who were afterwards expelled the country. We were detained here from the 5th to the 11th of March, in consequence of our luggage not having arrived from Caracas. Senor Arraiz, a civil and obliging native of the place,

accommodated us with his house during our stay, where we were tolerably at our ease.

The site of this town after that of Caracas is the best we have seen; but the climate is at least ten degrees hotter, as there is seldom much air stirring; the mean heat during our stay was eighty-six degrees. The plain in which it is situated is about three leagues long, and one in breadth, with the river Tocuyo winding through it at the back of the town; between it, and a chain of high calcareous mountains running from N. E. to S. W. there is a considerable tract of fertile land, the produce of which is principally sugar cane, maize, and plantains; but the nature of its soil is adapted to all sorts of cultivation—the wheat from hence, in particular, being much esteemed. The opposite range is more wooded, but exhibits less richness in the intervening flat. We are here shut in on all sides by mountains. The town, though large, has not been a place of much commerce, farther than in the exchange of its agricultural productions. It, therefore, seems an anomaly, that it should formerly have supported two convents—the one of Franciscans, the other Dominicans; besides which, there were three parish churches, and a public hospital—the former having suffered by the earthquake, the

Franciscan convent, which with the exception of the Cathedral at Caracas, is the finest religious edifice I have seen, is converted into the "Parochia," and service is regularly performed there, since the suppression of the monasteries. The population at present does not exceed from three to four thousand persons. We met with every assistance from the Political Judge (Juez Politico) in procuring fresh baggage mules, notwithstanding an embargo had been laid upon all animals in the neighbourhood for the Government service.

Like all other towns in this country, the streets run at right angles; generally speaking, they contain but few good houses. During our stay here, there was very little variety in our occupations. Once or twice —— took out his gun, and brought home some herons and macaws; the flesh of the latter is much esteemed by the natives. In the evenings there was a sort of rendezvous at the *river*, where the females make no scruple of bathing at the same time and place with the men! The best article of provision here is the bread, called "Pan de Tunja." It appeared to me the best I had tasted, being very white and rather sweet. Fruits were not very abundant, we could only procure oranges and water melons. Here it

was necessary to leave our horses, and purchase three fresh mules in their stead.

11*th March.* We set out at seven in the morning, more regularly organized in marching order—as from hence the difficult passes commence. The road is level and good for the first four leagues, winding through a defile of rich, varied, and cultivated land, abundantly watered. Its productions appeared to be cane, maize, plantains, and there were one or two haciendas of cocoa. There are several pretty passes through the latter, especially where the road led down to the river, which runs over a rocky bed with considerable impetuosity; a range of sterile mountains on either side this pass, rise gradually as you approach Olmucaro; their only produce being a species of wild lilac, of a fixed, and much brighter colour than the European plant. It was near four when we entered "Olmucaro Abaxo," a small Indian village, consisting of about forty houses or detached huts, and probably two hundred inhabitants, descendants of the original owners of the soil, who were reduced to the lowest state of indigent wretchedness, by the oppressive system of government, instituted by Old Spain, and its selfish and narrow-minded policy in keeping them in a state of

brute-like ignorance, and the most servile subjection—the natural consequence of which is, a disregard of all moral obligations. But in the midst of their poverty and degradation, there is to be observed in these poor Indians, a great degree of primitive simplicity, meekness of disposition, and a willingness to oblige — qualities that under present auspices may yet be rendered highly valuable! The Alcalde from whom we had bought a mule at Tocuyo, had prepared for us an apartment in the *guard-house* — the adjoining one being occupied by some Indian Conscripts, the contingent furnished by the village, in consequence of an assessment which has been made throughout the province; out of its small population, Olmucaro has lately been called upon for fifteen recruits. The subdued spirit of these poor people is strongly exemplified in their prison discipline—there not being even a door to secure them, and merely a sentry placed at the entrance. They are in general strong, well proportioned men, capable of undergoing much fatigue, and inured to the greatest privations. For a trifle some of them brought us a sufficient supply of forage for the animals. We had provided ourselves with a cold dinner at Tocuyo, and the first time made use of the canteens, a real luxury in

a tract of country where a knife and fork is seldom used, and a plate frequently a novelty. To reach the place we had a long ascent from the bed of the river. It is situated at what is called the extremity of the plains—*(Llanos)* shut in on all sides by mountains, and immediately at the foot of one of immense perpendicular height. The temperature is agreeable, being eight degrees cooler than Tocuyo.

12*th March.* At six o'clock we left the village, taking with us the servants, and one baggage animal to convey the canteens, the remainder, together with the spare mules, will henceforth follow, and join us at night at a given place. Such is our marching order.

We descended by a steep and craggy path till we again met the river Tocuyo at the bottom of a deep ravine. A rude bridge formed of the trunks of trees bound together, was raised on buttresses of stone, on either side, at a considerable elevation from the stream, which issuing from fissures in the mountains, foamed down a rocky bed. It was with great difficulty we got the mules over, and proceeded up a narrow defile, threatened by overhanging rocks and "cloud capped" mountains. At this spot the above river takes its rise, receiving several

tributary streams, which issue from the mountain, and join in its course. I saw last year, in Wales, some grand passes, where the scenery was magnificent, and a greater body of water foaming down rocky precipices; but when compared with this, the recollection dwindles into comparative insignificance. Here the natural accompaniments are inconceivably grand, and beggar my humble powers of description. The more we advanced, the greater was our astonishment at these beautiful scenes—Nature's sole work! Winding along avenues of luxuriant foliage of the most varied description; amongst which, overhanging the stream, were trees of gigantic size—many loaded with a white kind of moss, dropping from the branches like pendent icicles—others covered with ivy, or festooned with arches of *bignonia*, which stretch from tree to tree in verdant arcades, forming rich contrasts with those bearing an orange-coloured and deep blue flower—flocks of parroquets, doves, tropiales, &c. added to the novelty of a scene to all of us of the most intense interest! We now began the ascent of one of the highest and most difficult passes in the route—that between Olmucaro and Agua de Obispos, winding a considerable time up a precipitous and barren mountain, succeeded by others covered with immense forests composed

of the same rich variety of trees, which, from their height and size, must have stood for ages. The more we gained ground the more distant appeared the steep we had to climb; but the sublimity of this mountain world would have repaid any fatigue. After four hours of constant ascent we reached some sheds about the middle of the mountain, which had been erected by Morillo as a covering for troops who secured the pass. Here we made a halt, and had recourse to our canteens, furnished with a tolerable breakfast, which we enjoyed exceedingly in this romantic and magnificent wilderness. The temperature, owing to the great elevation, was cool and agreeable, and we found a spring of delicious water close at hand. It would be difficult to conceive the true grandeur of this spot, surrounded on all sides by immense barriers—some covered with impervious forests—the verdant foliage relieved by a sprinkling of trees, the leaves of which appeared white as snow—in parts immense crags of rock projecting through the foliage from the sides of the mountain—others more sterile, and of immense elevation—the solemn silence disturbed only by the murmuring of water down the rocky precipices! It was near two o'clock when we arrived at the summit of this chain of the Andes, after a

truly arduous and constant ascent of seven hours and a half. The scene now before us was again stupendous; mountains gradually lowering until they appeared to subside into a flat,—but probably deceptive, from the great distance. We were considerably above the clouds, which rolled on the summits of other eminences below us, and there was a very sensible chill in the atmosphere. We now descended for an hour and a half, on such a road that it was wonderful how the animals could keep their footing. We were much interested on this side by the great variety of beautiful wild flowers and mountain shrubs that grow in the greatest profusion and luxuriance—a complete study for a botanist—which science I never more regretted my ignorance of. Agua de Obispos, at the foot of the eminence, consists only of a few detached huts, inhabited by agriculturists. We were received in one of them, with our retinue, with the accustomed hospitality. The change of climate here is surprising: the thermometer in the night fell to 60°; a difference of 36 degrees between this place and St. Carlos. The produce of the few patches of ground that are in cultivation here, is wheat, peas, "garbances," &c. We had little expectation of meeting with provision, but were unexpectedly provided with fowls,

milk, and coffee, added to some doves that we had shot. The lodging was indifferent, but we are now pretty well accustomed to mud walls and earthen floors; and with ——'s originality, and inexhaustible fund of entertainment, and ——'s invariable good humour, such scenes are very entertaining, inasmuch as they give one an insight into the domestic character of the natives.

March 13*th*. We delayed our departure till a later hour than usual, to partake of "La Bebida de los Dioses," coffee and new milk—finally proceeding at seven o'clock. The first part of the road was a steep ascent which occupied us an hour, after which we had a delightful ride along a ridge of high mountains, constantly, though gradually descending for three hours, by an even road; the scenery was of the grandest description, although bearing but few traces of cultivation; a deep valley on either side succeeded by numerous parallel ranges of greater or less elevation, the path way at times so narrow, that a false step would have precipitated one down an almost perpendicular steep of incalculable depth. All the way along this beautiful slope we met with the most delicate shrubs, and in particular a great variety of myrtles of very luxuriant growth. About midway

the vale of Carache, running east and west, opened to our view; it had a most picturesque effect in the midst of this gigantic Andean scenery, and reminded me of a model I had seen of the valley of Chamouny, backed by the lofty Alps, only wanting perpetual snow to make it a great resemblance, although probably from hence there is a much greater extent of mountains. The descent to the town occupied three hours; on a nearer approach it has all the appearance of a camp, consisting of about one hundred detached houses built round a square; a river runs through the vale, which is most favorably situated for culture, though at present much neglected in the vicinity of the town, which, having been occupied, at different times, by both contending armies, is reduced to the lowest state of misery; no place that we have passed through has presented so truly desolate an appearance; many of the houses are deserted, the inhabitants having sought shelter in the woods, in preference to being subject to military occupation either from friend or foe; the former, being ill paid, are sometimes driven to commit exactions, in which, of course, the latter have not been behind them. In those huts that are still occupied, there is hardly an article of furniture, to many not even a door, and it was with infinite difficulty we procured provision of any kind;

the Alcalde's influence, (who by the by was not the most assiduous we met with) was not sufficient to procure us a fowl at any price. To conclude the list of wants, we were informed that there was not in the town wine enough for the Communion Service! The church is equally bereft of its ornaments, as the houses of their little furniture and utensils.

March 14*th*. Left Carache before day-light, following the road through the valley, which is probably three leagues in extent, but very narrow. The mountains on each side form part of the Cordillera, which is laid down in the map east of the lake Maracaibo, its direction being north and south. Shortly after leaving the village, the vale assumed a less desolate aspect, there appeared a succession of small haciendas of cane and maize, more remarkable for the freshness of their verdure, than their actual richness. The vale terminates in a high mountain which we had to ascend, pursuing the road to the Indian village of St. Anna; having crossed the ridge, we entered a tract of quite another description, which for identity must be called the vale of St. Anna, its direction is nearly parallel with that of Carache, probably four leagues in extent, and one in breadth, but its features totally op-

posed, excepting at its commencement where the soil also appears good. I do not think we have passed a spot more remarkable for its exuberance, and great natural fertility. From the summit of the two ranges of eminences which enclose this vale, descending in a gradual declivity, vegetation is abundantly prolific, and of a force that bespeaks a great depth and richness of soil. The wood on each side is thick and umbrageous, in the bottom a small river runs the whole extent of the valley; in the lower ground the soil being pleasingly diversified by wood and lawn, the richness of the pasturage on these verdant and sloping banks is remarkable; and if the hand of industry were but employed in the cultivation of so naturally prolific and picturesque a spot, it could not fail to be eminently successful. Some ground has been cleared, and is now cultivated, but its extent is trifling compared to that which is yet in a state of nature. We have not passed any spot that we have considered so favorable for a European settlement; for, in addition to the great advantages offered by the soil and situation, the climate is such as to suit a European constitution. Its present inhabitants consider it cold, and from its elevated situation it is comparatively so with the plains, but what we

should consider a moderate temperature, the thermometer being at 70. In the neighbourhood of the village the vine has been tried, and we were told it yielded an abundant produce. The soil and moderate heat is also well adapted for the coffee plant. Wheat is grown in considerable quantity, as well as potatoes, beans, &c. plantains and maize; all other produce that thrives in a mild temperature would no doubt succeed. For cotton, indigo, and cocoa, it would not be warm enough, but the preceding articles will sufficiently recommend a situation which for natural beauty we have not seen exceeded. The site of the village is on an oblong eminence, at the further extremity of the vale; the houses are small and of miserable aspect, and it was with difficulty we procured wherewith to make a meal. The inhabitants are without exception the comeliest looking people we have yet seen in the country, although the women are more or less afflicted with "Goitres;" their complexion are of a lighter cast than what we have usually seen. There are not at present above fifteen or twenty families in the place. It was between eleven and twelve when we arrived here, leaving it again at three. The only curiosity the place contains is the stone on which General Morillo alighted to meet Bolivar, to treat of the armistice concluded in November,

1820. We heard several anecdotes of both from a poor but patriotic inhabitant of the village, whom we visited. I should not omit to remark, the predilection which the population in general have for foreigners, and the attention that is generally paid to us, for it is a circumstance of some importance, and may tend to very beneficial results. As we advanced the western extremity, the vale appeared to have been more cultivated, although much neglected at present. From hence the road, accompanied by the same interesting and fertile scenery, led us up a considerable ascent, till we attained the summit of another eminence enveloped with clouds. As night approached, we quickened our pace, enabled so to do by the even pathway along the range, until we came up with our *arriero*, who had *bivouacked* on a grassy spot. Hence we had a most tedious and fatiguing descent of at least two hours, to an insignificant village, called "Mocoy," which we had in view almost continually, and to all appearance close at hand, but such were the windings and zig-zag pathways, that we were heartily tired on arriving. It is placed at the foot of the mountain, consisting only of a few straggling huts, inhabited by goatherds. The poor animals, after a hard day's journey of ten leagues, were doomed to pass the night in fasting, there being neither a blade of

grass or corn in the place; and the miserable hut wherein we were received not containing so much as a draught of water, at least we could obtain none; and I have little doubt it is the policy of these poor Indians to say, "*No hay*," to every thing that is enquired for, as it certainly is their practice, in consequence of the repeated passage of troops, who levy contributions, and seldom think it necessary to pay for their entertainment. It was near eleven before the servants arrived with our hammocks.

15*th March*. Before starting in the morning we did, for ample payment, obtain a little fresh goat's milk and coffee. Then pursued a southerly course along the valley, which, as we advanced, increased in richness and fertility. The first part was wild and romantic, and shut in by immense rocky fastnesses; but the nearer we approached Panpanito the more the mountains receded, leaving a rich tract of partially cultivated and in part wooded land, with abundance of water. We passed several small haciendas of cocoa, plantations of cane and maize, in very good condition; the natural productions being of the most prolific and verdant description. Arrived at Panpanito, a distance only of two leagues and a half, between eight and nine, having passed an un-

usual number of detached cottages. This is the nearest point to Truxillo, and contains an advanced guard from thence, consisting of a troop of cavalry. We remarked the fine athletic appearance of the men was much at variance with their wretched accoutrements: the greater number were in a state of demi-nudity—none of them with either stockings or boots; the principal badge of their profession being a kind of hélmet made from *bullock's hide*, with a strip of blacked sheep skin in lieu of a *feather*. We were sorry not to see the ancient city of Truxillo; a sacrifice we necessarily made in consequence of its being a couple of leagues out of our route. In this small place we were tolerably supplied with provisions, but found the heat very oppressive—the thermometer at 84°. Made preparations after an early dinner for a long march to Mendoza, distant eight leagues, but our plan was frustrated. Leaving at three o'clock we had a delightful, although at first sultry ride, through the remainder of the vale, which expanded as we advanced. The road lay through verdant and shady lanes of the richest fertility, in one or two instances through haciendas of cocoa; a great portion of the surrounding country being tolerably cultivated, but not to half the extent of its capability. The great circumférence of this fine valley is

hardly surpassed in beauty by those of Aragua, although much of it yet remains to be cleared and planted. The *coup d'œil* of its full basin, from a wooded eminence at the further extremity, heightened by the warm tints of the evening sun, was rich almost beyond precedent. Having loitered away some time in the wood, in parrot shooting, we found it too late to carry our first intention into effect, therefore stopped for the night at a *Pulperia* on "Savanna Larga" —a plain of considerable extent, situated on the summit of a mountain, where we found good pasturage and an accommodating *Pulpéro*, who prepared us an excellent dish made from the "yuca," the plant from which arrow-root and cassava are made. Excepting the arracacha, it is the best of many good roots that I have tasted in America, and must be very nutritious. We found the temperature mild and agreeable.

16*th March*. Leaving at six o'clock, we descended from the Savannah by a winding road to the river Motatan, which we had some difficulty in passing, from the narrowness and *instability* of the wooden bridge, which the cautious mules had a particular aversion to. On the opposite bank we passed some beautiful trees, of extraordinary growth and symmetrical form. The country continued to be highly interesting,

interspersed with fine estates, and others that have been totally neglected, but bearing the trace of former richness; especially a cocoa *hacienda* in the vicinity of Valera. It is extensive, and used to produce three hundred mule loads a year. The above village is remarkable only as the nearest point to Maracaibo that we shall pass; being situated between that town and Truxillo, and not more than ten leagues distant from the lake—an immense inland sea, which measures one hundred and fifty miles from north to south, its greatest width being ninety, and circumference four hundred and fifty. The eastern coast is spoken of as being very arid, not susceptible of cultivation, and extremely unhealthy; and on the west the land only begins to be fruitful twenty leagues south of the city of Maracaibo. The southern extremity of the lake, on the contrary, is equal in richness to any portion of South America. The city built on the west bank, is seventeen or eighteen miles from the sea. It stands upon a sandy soil, devoid of vegetation. Its temperature is excessively hot, aggravated by the scarcity of rain. In July and August the heat is excessive. In this tropical country, from March to October is considered summer; but the seasons are not divided, as with us,

into four parts. You only hear of summer and winter; nor is it cold or heat that forms the distinction, but the wet and dry periods; which, as they are very variable, subject one, not to four, but to twenty different seasons in the year. In Maracaibo the atmosphere is so impregnated with heat, that you appear to breathe the air of a furnace. The inhabitants counteract its effects by frequent bathing in the lake, which is considered healthy. Notwithstanding all this, a residence there is far from pernicious after a person becomes "*acclimaté*;" no endemic disorders being known, and you are much less subject to disease than in many places where the heat is less, and the means of refreshment more numerous.

We continued our route to *Mendoza*. The sun was exceedingly powerful, and the beasts much tired. On approaching it the scenery became less interesting; the mountains narrowing until we were shut in by two sterile ranges. It being Sunday, the inhabitants were all at mass, and it was twelve o'clock before we were in the way of getting a breakfast. At length the retinue arrived, and with the remains of a fowl, a *little* bread, and *three* eggs, all we could procure in this miserable hole, we made a meal.

This is another poor Indian village: the chief produce of the neighbourhood is wheat. Fortunately the alcalde heard of our arrival, and came to invite us to take up our quarters at his house, a short distance from *Mendoza*, where we should meet with better accommodation; an offer we gladly availed ourselves of, and experienced from him and his wife every civility and attention his means were capable of affording. The temperature here was very agreeable.

17*th March*. Having a cordillera to pass in the course of the day, we left *Mendoza* between six and seven; at a distance of two leagues we commenced the ascent, which occupied us a couple of hours, the road being tolerably good. There was a considerable extent of the same grand and mountainous forest scenery which we enjoyed on the journey to *Agua de Obispos*, pervaded by the same solemn silence,—a remarkable feature in the forests we have passed, where you scarcely hear a sound but that of your own voice and the rushing of waters.* I am at a loss to describe

* Humboldt says of the American woods, "It is scarcely to be distinguished what most excites your admiration;—the deep silence of those solitudes—the individual beauty and contrast of form—or that vigour and freshness

the magnificence of the scene from this lofty summit; for mountain grandeur we have scarcely seen it equalled. Beneath us, at an immense depth, lay the verdant vale of Timotes, through which we could trace for leagues a serpentine river;—rising above this, a range of hills of moderate dimensions, but of almost perpendicular acclivity; the summits are extensive table lands, cultivated in parts, with the village *La Mesa*, (so named from the formation of the eminence,) at the eastern extremity;—hence a second chain, of immense height, rose abruptly from the "*Mesa*;" mostly covered with forest, but terminating above the clouds, which appeared to rest midway, in rocky and craggy summits of various forms. It occupied nearly double the time to descend into the vale, and it was two o'clock ere we reached Timotes. We had pretty sharp appetites, having only breakfasted with a crust and a cup of coffee at the hospitable alcalde's. We were here at the foot of the Paramo, with the clouds just hovering over our heads: the atmosphere was damp and chilly, the maximum of heat being 63°. We were present at

of vegetable life which characterize the climate of the tropics. It might be said, that the earth, overloaded with plants, does not allow them space enough to unfold themselves."

a religious procession of San Felipe, (who is, I believe, the patron saint of the Indians,) exceeding in burlesque any thing I have before seen; but which excited at the same time, a sensation of pity, that this mild and tractable people should have been subjected to so idolatrous and disgusting a system, and of indignation that their former government should have contrived thus to humiliate a race of human beings to so degrading and revolting a condition. It is to be hoped a more enlightened policy will sweep away such gross abuses.

18th March. The object of this day's journey was to cross the "*Paramo*"—a name given to the highest mountain in a Cordillera. We started soon after day-light, commencing a regular and continued ascent. The road was much better than any we had passed in the mountain districts. The difference in the temperature gradually manifested itself until we were glad to have recourse to our cloaks. With the change of climate, the country also assumed a different aspect; the more we advanced, the greater the barrenness of the soil, until passing Chachopo, a straggling village in a bleak part of the mountains, all useful vegetation ceased—the only covering to the stony mountains being a kind of moss, and a plant somewhat resembling

the aloe, but of a more woolly appearance. We continued ascending, the rarity of the atmosphere encreasing, until we reached the summit of the Paramo at ten o'clock. Here we found a surprising fall in the thermometer, which was down at 42½°—a transition that we of course felt very sensibly. The morning was extremely favorable for crossing, being perfectly clear; at other times it is often dangerous, and in stormy weather impracticable, to effect the passage. The view from the height comprised only a mass of barren and rugged mountains, more wild than interesting. I much regret not having a barometer, by which these respective elevations might have been accurately ascertained. Hence we descended by a gradual slope, and tolerably good road for four hours successively, the scenery possessing no novelty, unless indeed the abundant sources of various rivers, which take their rise in these mountains; and it is interesting to watch the encreasing velocity of their currents as they proceed, receiving reinforcements from every ravine. Arrived at Mucuchies at two o'clock—the temperature was agreeable, about 66°; but the country equally uninteresting, not a tree to be seen. A considerable quantity of corn is grown here; and as we approached the town, we observed upon the mountains a great many horses and oxen.

The town and its neighbourhood formerly contained 3000 inhabitants, but the number is very sensibly diminished, from three causes, the war, emigration, and small-pox; the place itself is, however, so evident an improvement on the villages we have lately passed, that I begin to hope we have seen the worst. Took up our quarters at the *Pulperia*, where we found very tolerable "accommodation for man and beast." The church, although quite in humble style, is one of the neatest, and best constructed that we have seen.

19*th March*. If we found the climate here agreeable in the middle of the day, we have had reason to think less favorably of it during the night, the cold being very sharp. On rising, the glass was as low as 46°—a change of twenty degrees in a few hours! From hence we gradually descended, until we were again in summer heat; these transitions are surprisingly great in so short a space of time. By degrees the country became more fertile, and as we gradually descended by a stony road from Mucuchies, had an opportunity of tracing from its source the river Chama, which receives a number of mountain streams, and rolls over its rocky bed with great velocity as it approaches the small village of Mucucubar. Here we

observed for the first time, the craggy summits of distant mountains, bearing S. W. covered with perpetual snow; the scenery increased amazingly in richness and grandeur on nearing Merida. The high chain of mountains on the left were finely wooded—the vale partially cultivated—and the road crossing verdant lawns intersected by rivulets with the Chama increasing in impetuosity and size from numerous streams that it receives. Between twelve and one we commenced an abrupt ascent to crown this morning's ride, exceedingly fatiguing to the animals from its steepness. When on the summit, we found ourselves in the delightful city of Merida, from whence I propose to forward this letter.

ROSARIO DE CUCUTA, 1st April, 1823.

22*nd March.* Having recruited at Merida three days, and it now being the eve of our departure, I must give you some account of so charming a spot, and its neighbourhood. It is considered by travellers to be about half way between Caracas and Bogotá; but I believe there is no accurate computation of the distance. "The city was founded as long since as 1558, under the name of St. Jago de los Caralleros, and is situated on a table land of three leagues in length, and one broad," surrounded by the rivers Macujun, which has its source to the north, in "los Paramos de los Conejos,"—the "Albarregas," and the Chama, which empties itself into the Lake of Maracaibo; here are united with extraordinary felicity the greatest gifts of nature, soil, climate and situation; the first is of that peculiar quality as to be equally adapted to all the productions of a tropical climate, as well as those of northern latitudes, and in its present *imperfect* state of cultivation, it yields within view of the city, cocoa, coffee and cotton, indigenous to a warm climate; plantains, maize, all kinds of roots, such as arracacha, yuca, vegetables, and the best of fruits in high perfection; which

require considerable heat; moreover wheat, barley, peas, potatoes, &c. are equally abundant, although thriving in a comparatively cool atmosphere.

The primary cause of these heterogeneous productions, so different in their nature, is the climate varying according to the position of the land, from an excess of heat, to the greatest intensity of cold. In the vale of the Chama for instance, running at the foot of the table land, the heat is probably between 80 and 90° and at the summit of the mountains, (15,000 feet above the level of the sea,) which form its boundary, and immediately fronting the town, you have perpetual snow. Its site is most striking and singularly beautiful; ascending from the valley by a very steep and narrow pass, you gain the summit of an extensive table land, tending in a slight degree towards an inclined plane as it runs westward. The city commences at the eastern extremity, covering at least a square half league. On the north, south, and east, the sides of the mountain are perpendicular, and to the west, as I have before observed, gradually sloping in an extensive "*plateau.*" At the bottom of each precipice are the three above named rivers, and beyond in each direction, rise a chain of lofty mountains

of more or less fertility. Those to the south, which are the highest, covered with large forest trees, and above their dark green appear the rocky summits enveloped in perpetual snow. I can give you but a faint outline of this most picturesque and delightful spot! the city being in the middle region, enjoys a temperature extraordinarily moderate and agreeable; the heat never being oppressive, and cold scarcely sensible, the average is from 67 to 70°. Next to Caracas, this is by far the largest town in the province of Venezuela, and like it, two thirds at least is a heap of ruins from the same melancholy cause; (its population, in 1804, amounted to near 12,000 persons, whereas at present, 3,000 is probably the extent.) The prodigious velocity of the shock which laid both cities in ruins is inconceivable; the distance is nearly 500 miles, and yet the convulsion was simultaneous! Merida in proportion to its size, has suffered more than Caracas, for with the exception of two streets, at least a mile in length, it presents an unvaried picture of ruin and desolation. Merida is the capital of a department, the see of a bishop, and a municipality. Before the calamity of 1812, it possessed five convents, and three parish churches; at present one only of the former remains, that of St. Domingo, which, since the abo-

lition of religious orders by the decree of congress, is converted into the cathedral. Here is a convent of nuns, twenty-three in number, of the order of St. Clara, still existing, an hospital, and public college, in which sixty students are instructed in Spanish, Latin, Natural Philosophy, and Theology. In like manner to Caracas, the streets intersect each other at right angles, each having in the centre a clear stream of running water. I assure you I do not exaggerate in setting this forth as the most delightful spot the imagination can paint. What might not be made of it, if peopled by European families of enlightened ideas, and with sufficient capital to rebuild and beautify the city as its situation deserves? With any society it might be made a delightful residence; there is a great deal of land on the "Mesa," in its immediate vicinity, which could be converted into gardens and pleasure grounds, capable of producing the finest fruits. The surrounding country offers abundance of productive soil for those disposed to agriculture. The intrinsic value of lands is of course influenced by their site and irrigation, as well as their proximity to principal towns and sea ports; and in all these points the neighbourhood of this town is abundantly favored. There could not be a spot better

adapted for the capital of the province, for which it enjoys the following advantages;—placed in a centrical position, it would be an entrepôt for the commerce of the *Llanos*, the most fertile part of the interior, whence their produce might be conveyed for exportation to the lake of Maracaibo, distant only four or five days journey, and which, by an improvement of roads, might be reduced to two or three. The river Chama, already become a considerable body of water, might, I conceive, although at considerable expense and labour, owing to the velocity of the current, be made navigable; in which case it would by its communication with the lake, give to the town almost the advantages of a maritime situation. The abundance of mountain rivers, and streams would give great facilities for manufactories, mills, and machinery in general. We understood that land might be purchased here at very low rates from individuals, to whom it principally belongs, and in whose hands it is entirely neglected; its natural advantages are too many to allow of its long continuing uncultivated. ——, being acquainted with the Gov. Col. Peredes, he quartered us in the best house in the town; one that has been lately built by a Sēnor Lobo, the most complete and certainly the cleanest I have seen in the country; it is well adapted for the heat,

with a corridor round the inner court, large airy rooms, &c. We experienced great civility from our host during our stay here, and have fared excellently well, to make up for short commons *en route*. Provisions of all kinds are plentiful; wine only is not to be procured, in consequence of the communication with Maracaibo being stopped. Our relay of mules we have agreed for with Sēnor Lobo. We proceed on our march to-morrow morning, and the impressions which Merida (from what it might be, more than what it actually is) has made upon us, will, I venture to say, be as lasting as they are pleasing!

23*rd March*. At an early hour we commenced the third division of our long journey, proceeding westward along the Plateau, at least two leagues in extent. The soil is of the richest description, but little cultivated; not so the extended valley beyond the river, which runs north of the Mesa; for from its banks to the foot of the mountains, which close the view on that side, is one of the finest tracts of land I ever beheld; more cultivated, (although not made the most of,) than any space of similar extent that we have passed for a long time, and forming scenery of the most picturesque and beautiful description; in one or two places the vale

winding round projecting bases of the mountains, branches off to the right in gentle rises, and terminates in a distant perspective. Some quantity of rain had fallen early in the morning, which had brought out the rich colours of the sugar-cane, plantain, and a variety of foliage in the valley. In the distance were visible the rugged summits, enveloped in eternal snows, with fleecy clouds hanging about the midway forests. An artist of the most happy imagination could never have composed so beautiful a picture—not even Claude, who "emends the faults of nature." Descending from the table land, by a short but steep and stony road, we entered the vale of Exjido, having crossed two rivers, the "Alvaregas" and "Montauban," we arrived at the village, which is about two leagues and a half from Merida. This rich flat is probably a league in extent, surpassing the preceding in the uniformity of its cultivation; indeed, no where have we seen so great an extent of land more fully employed, and in no place has it produced so admirable and picturesque an effect. As we ascended the mountains we cast many a parting glance at this lovely scene. The rest of the road to St. Juan lay through mountainous passes; the acacia, is in great abundance here, together with wild jasmine, and other beautiful mountain flowers, spreading a delicious

fragrance. We passed a fine *hacienda* of coffee and cocoa about midway; crossed two or three rapid rivers, and arrived, after a fatiguing ascent, on a rough and rocky road, at the plain, on which is situated St. Juan.

We took up our quarters with the commandant, Señor Pina, whose hospitality —— had before experienced, and found him not only a good host, but a sensible and well informed man. He employs a portion of the inhabitants in cultivating a small *hacienda* (farm,) and governs the whole in so mild a manner, that at his slightest summons they assemble, even for the purpose of conscription; at the very idea of which, in other villages, the inhabitants frequently quit their homes, and retire to the mountains.

The greater part, I may almost say the whole of the persons we have yet met upon our journey, have declared their utter detestation of the yoke under which they have so long groaned, and which they have now so gloriously cast off. The grinding oppression which the Spaniards exercised over this *then* ill-fated country, was inconceivable. The inhabitants were not allowed to cultivate either the vine, the olive, or the mulberry. These restrictions were

enforced merely to insure to the mother country (as she was then termed,) a market for three of her staple commodities—wine, oil, and silk; and the natives of Colombia were prevented exercising their industry in three branches of trade to which their soil and climate were peculiarly applicable—they will now be able to resume them, but it will require much time, and the aid of European activity and capital before they can be carried to any extent. It is the conviction of all the reasonable and reflecting people, with whom we have conversed, that the best policy the government can adopt, is to encourage, as much as possible, the introduction of European industry, mechanics, and population. This is the only course by which the country can possibly be relieved from the extreme of poverty, and wretchedness, by which it is now completely overwhelmed; but it is, nevertheless, surprising, to hear these sentiments expressed by a people who have been tutored by their oppressors in an absolute abhorrence of all foreigners, and of the innovations upon the old and corrupt system, which they would naturally introduce; which by enlightening the people, would have accelerated the term of their emancipation; and it is no less singular, that a population, which in general conforms so scrupulously to the Catholic rites, should not only

look favourably upon those of a different religion, but receive them as the regenerators of their country.

There was formerly a convent here, the building is now in ruins, and the nuns dispersed, in consequence of a difference in *politics*. With the revolution, party feelings were introduced into the sanctuary, which ended in the abolition of their order: the *Godas* are gone to Maracaibo; those at Merida being the *patriotic* portion of the sisterhood.

I should not omit to mention a small lake in the neighbourhood of St. Juan, possessing singularly useful qualities, as it may be considered one of the greatest natural curiosities in the country. In its bed is deposited a kind of salt of a rocky consistency, called *Urado*, which, when mixed with *Chimon*, an extract from tobacco, possesses very valuable properties, and is much used by the natives. It is also essentially serviceable in fattening cattle, and is used for a variety of other purposes. The Indians obtain it in small portions at a time, by diving to the bottom of the Lake, which is four or five fathoms deep, and detaching it from the bed; in this dangerous service many have perished, and it is only surprising that for

so trifling a recompense (the utmost they can gain being a few rials per day) they subject themselves to the risk. The *Urado* is not known to exist in any other part of the Republic, and it is matter of regret that so valuable an article should at present be totally neglected.

24*th March.* Departed from St. Juan early in the morning, having before us one of the most difficult and dangerous passes in this part of America. On leaving the village the country assumed a neglected and generally sterile appearance; descending gradually for about a league we arrived at a double chain of mountains, between which, at considerable depth, the river Chama rushed along its rocky bed, its violence augmenting every instant from the numerous streams it receives from the mountains. We alternately ascended and descended by difficult passes cut in the side of the mountains, and followed the road which runs from North to South in this romantic defile. The further we proceeded, the more grand the scenery became—rocky mountains on either side, encreasing in height, and wildness of aspect—the narrow pathway cut in the almost perpendicular sides of the mountains, and barely wide enough for the passage of the animals. We arrived at length on an ele-

vated promontory, at the bottom of which another rapid river joins the Chama. The road winding down the steep side of the rock, is justly considered a difficult and dangerous pass; so narrow is it, that the smallest deviation would precipitate the mule and rider down a perpendicular height of some hundred feet into the Chama, which rolls at the bottom. On the other hand, the rocky mountain rises with equal precipitancy, so that you have no resource but the narrow pathway winding down in sharp angles, which barely admit of the animals turning. In this defile we passed two curious bridges, thrown across the Chama for the convenience of travellers between Merida and Maracaibo; they consist simply of long strips of hide, fastened on either side to poles fixed in the earth; on the surface of these is placed a square piece of hide, on which the traveller seats himself, and with the assistance of a cord, to which it is fastened, pulls himself across: the river, although not deep, runs with such violence that it would be impossible to ford it. The animals were much fatigued when we reached Estanques, a distance of only five leagues.

This is the name of a cocoa and coffee plantation of considerable extent, belonging to some

families who reside in Bogotá; it is under the superintendance of a Major domo, who has 150 slaves under his command. Being yet early, and as we proposed remaining here for the night, we passed an hour in the hacienda in shooting, where we found a variety of birds of beautiful plumage.

On these estates the cocoa tree is planted in lines, at intervals of from twelve to fourteen feet; and as it requires protection from the sun's rays, rows of *plantain* and *L'Erytrine* (of very rapid growth and very umbrageous) are planted in alternate lines at the same time—the latter shelters it after the second year, and the former protects it the first, at the same time yielding its own fruit; the plant usually yields two crops, the one in July, the other in December, which in the gathering and drying require particular care. The nut is extracted from the pod, and placed either on leaves or cane-work to dry, great caution being taken that no moisture is communicated; the process is repeated for a considerable time, after which it is housed, especial care being taken that none of the pod, or the unripe nut be mixed with it. The plant seldom yields fruit before the fifth year, in some places not till the sixth or seventh; but after once bearing, if properly managed,

will continue to fructify from thirty to fifty years.

The cocoa of Caracas, which I believe is understood to be that of all Venezuela, is esteeemed, with one exception only, that of Soconusco, the best that grows. It requires a situation sheltered from the north, to be near a river by which it may be irrigated in dry weather, and drained in the rainy season.

The coffee-plant is comparatively of recent cultivation; it was not introduced into Venezuela till 1784, since when it has been an object of great attention; it is less capricious as to soil than cocoa, and a much hardier plant; it yields a crop the second or third year, and the tree, which is allowed to grow to four or five feet, will last forty years; like the cocoa, it requires shelter from excessive heat—the plantain, in some districts, is considered sufficient—in others, *L'Erytrine*, is used, which is planted alternately with the coffee; plenty of moisture is also requisite. When the berry is ripe, it is shaken off the tree on to cloths which are spread for the purpose, and afterwards exposed to the sun for two or three weeks, to be well dried.

The agriculturist, in this country, has an excellent method of availing himself of the services of his slaves, almost free of any expense. Each man, or family, receives a certain portion of land, called a *Conuco,* which he cultivates for his own support; for this purpose he is left at liberty a day in each week. A taste for husbandry is hereby acquired, which in the end is beneficial to the estate; five days are devoted to the *hacienda,* and on Sunday they are again free. After hearing mass, in which they are very punctilious, the rest of the day is devoted to dancing, a recreation which the blacks are passionately fond of.

Amongst the most liberal laws adopted by the first national congress, is that of abolishing slavery after the present generation. A fund is also established for the purpose of annually redeeming a certain number from bondage, so that in a few years the unnatural distinction will no longer exist. From the period of passing the decree, the children of slaves are declared free, but bound to indemnify the master, who has been at the expense of clothing and feeding them, either by a certain number of years of personal servitude, or an equivalent to the expense incurred.

We were seated at dinner on the balcony which surrounds the house, when all the children belonging to the estate, to the number of about sixty—the boys in one line, the girls in another—descending by a winding-path from the village, approached the church, singing in very good time an hymn, or evening prayer; when, in front of the house, they all knelt down in the same order, and lifting up their hands prayed aloud. All religious ceremonies are impressive; and in the present instance that feeling was greatly enhanced by the *situation*—as it were in the midst of the wilderness. Taken by surprise, the effect of so many young creatures addressing their Creator in the same words and tone, joined with the consideration, of how inestimable a blessing the introduction of Christianity, although so disfigured, is amongst a race of beings but lately barbarians, made it the most impressive sight I recollect to have witnessed.

Towards evening it began to rain, and continued with considerable violence the whole of the night. We did not fail to hear it, being kept awake by myriads of mosquitos, and a small fly, called *Ejen*, equally persecuting, although more diminutive than a flea; we were

frightful figures in the morning from their joint efforts.

Mr. ——, who has occasionally fallen in with us since we left Valencia, arrived here this morning in a heavy shower. A day or two since he lost a valuable horse, from the sting of a very diminutive serpent, the poison of which was so very subtle that the animal died within an hour; they are called by the natives *Aranas;* and it is only when immediate precautions are taken after the bite, that the animal is ever saved; it is even then a matter of much uncertainty. One of our best mules was stung in the foot, but remedies being instantly applied, we have hopes of her recovery; falling in with these reptiles, is not the least of our apprehensions. This particular species, however, only attack the brute creation.

About noon, there being a temporary gleam of sunshine, we thought it well to proceed. We commenced our route by entering a wood, and forded a small river, which intersects the road in a serpentine form at least a dozen times. As we advanced, the forest thickened, and trees presented themselves of a size and luxuriant growth, such as we had not before seen. One

of the peculiarities of trees in this hemisphere is, that they run up to an amazing height, in a perfectly straight line, before they begin to branch out, and from the boughs, various shoots, equally perpendicular, descend and take root. We had not advanced very far when the rain came down in torrents, obliging us for the first time to have recourse to our cloaks. At the distance of two leagues we came up with our baggage animals; many of them having got loose in the forest, the morning had been lost in recovering them; the arriero therefore proposed stopping the rest of the day at a cottage in the wood, and we thought it expedient to do the same. The inhabitants of the next village being equally famed for horse-stealing, and anti-republican principles.

Vijagual, the name of this *Chaumiere Indienne*, is the most romantic spot imaginable; situated on a gentle rise, it commands a view of the mountainous forest that encompasses it on all sides; for the most part impervious to man, and the sole residence of animals hostile to his nature. The gloomy silence that uniformly pervades American forests is here broken by the impetuous course of the river Macuti, which flows through it, now much swollen by the rains. In this wilderness we again found a family possessing the same hospitable attributes, and

alacrity to supply the wants of travellers, who they have been taught to look upon with mistrust, if not with horror. We moreover met with good provision, and plenty of cane for the mules. The mother had by no means the manners of a person who had passed the greater part of her life, as was the case, in such a solitude; she had four as fine children as I have seen in the country, which with two or three servants, completed the circle.

26*th March.* At day light pursued our route through the forest, which, with the exception of one or two openings, presenting the grandest pictures of wood and mountain scenery, occupied the greater part of the tract from hence to the *Parochia* of Bayladores, and consequently is not less than six leagues in extent; the river was our constant companion, watering a soil of uncommon natural fertility; the road tolerably level and good; a number of detached houses form the *Parochia* of Bayladores. For the first time we saw the tobacco plant in cultivation, a considerable quantity being grown in this neighbourhood; it is a source of great profit to the government, who have in the village of Bayladores an establishment for the manufacture of segars and snuff. The Individuals who grow the plant are obliged to

sell it to the government at a certain price. After undergoing the various preparations, it is retailed to the public at an advance of four or five rials a pound; this monopoly is however to be done away with as soon as circumstances will permit.

"Tobacco since the year 1777 has been the "exclusive property of the state. The valleys "of Aragoa, Orituco, Varinas, La Grita, and "Bayladores, are the spots where it is most "cultivated. It requires a rich and moist soil, "and great care in keeping the plant free from "weeds; it grows generally to the height of "three feet; and as the leaves ripen, they are "separately taken off when the sun is at the "meridian, to avoid the least degree of moisture "which would otherwise injure it. This tobacco "is principally made into segars, before which "a juice is extracted, called *Chimon*, which is "used by the inhabitants in large quantities."

There appeared to be nothing remarkable in the town which we merely passed through; it has been much destroyed by the Spanish troops, a division of which, commanded by La Torre, was quartered here eleven months. Strange to say, the village and neighbourhood still have the reputation of being attached to the

Spanish interest! Another league brought us to La Cevada, so called from the quantity of barley that is grown there; the situation is extremely pretty, and the land very fertile, and tolerably cultivated; two ridges of wooded mountain enclose an extensive vale running east and west, the greater part of which is sown with grain, but still leaving patches of rich pasturage: several detached farm houses of neat appearance add to the picturesque effect of the scenery. It was our wish to stop at one of these houses, the animals being very tired, but in none could we find an inhabitant; we were therefore compelled to proceed to the extremity of the vale called La Playta, where by the greatest chance, we discovered a farm house in a retired spot, the owner proving to be the person to whom we were recommended by the family at Vijaguel. While our willing host was employed in preparing our dinner, we spent an hour or two in dove and pigeon shooting, having observed large flocks of each in the corn fields of La Cevada. The harvest had lately been got in, which I believe seldom fails of being abundant without any artificial preparation; the soil is naturally so rich, that it yields a crop every year. Their mode of agriculture is of the simplest nature: after gathering the grain, which they cut off near

the ear, the straw is burnt on the land; a wedge of iron fixed to a rough block of wood forms the plough wherewith to turn the soil, for which purpose, oxen are used of a remarkably fine breed; the process of sowing follows, which in two or three months is succeeded by an abundant crop; the grain is then placed in an area, prepared for the purpose, and trodden out of the husk by horses and mules, who are driven round it for that purpose.

Towards evening we found it very cold, perhaps in consequence of being previously heated with shooting; nevertheless the glass was at one time as low as 55 degrees. In spite of our precaution in not sleeping at Bayladores, we had a mule stolen during the night; I have little doubt that the depredators were part of a body of troops who passed late in the evening towards Bayladores, and who must have seen our stud feeding in the savanna below.

27*th March.* Were detained here till nine in the morning, making search, and writing to the authorities on the road, to apprize them of the theft: at that hour we got off, and commenced the ascent of a small *Paramo,* called *Portachuelo.* The natives regard these spots,

where on the summit it is generally very cold, with a respect almost amounting to awe. We met a party descending so muffled up, that their eyes and noses were the only parts exposed to the atmosphere; they expressed surprise at our not being additionally clothed; but to us the temperature was most agreeable, being at 60°. The descent was extremely tedious and fatigueing, by a winding road through a continuation of forest nearly the whole way. We reached La Grita, a distance of only five leagues, by two o'clock, where we took up our residence with the Curate. This town, which is rather considerable, is prettily situated on an eminence, commanding a view of a large portion of cultivated land, the whole hemmed in by high mountains. The population is by no means proportioned to its size, many of the houses being deserted; but as it was a "Dia de Procession," there was a considerable influx from the neighbourhood. The women are mostly tall, and with a few exceptions very plain, and much disfigured with *Goitres*, a disease which prevails to a great extent in this line of mountainous country. We met with very indifferent accommodation, owing to the late advance of Morales, which had impoverished the town. The Port of Maracaibo, the key to this part of the country being also in his possession, all

intercourse with it is at a stand still. The detachment with which he made that extraordinary incursion, did not go beyond La Grita; indeed it is unaccountable how he was allowed to proceed thus far, when he might have been opposed by very superior forces.

28*th March.* At day-light we continued our march through a fertile, but little cultivated country, with finely wooded mountains, and several small rivers. The road was comparatively good and level for the first five leagues, which brought us to a very picturesque spot, called *El Cobre*, from the copper mines in its neighbourhood. There is a small house in the valley destined for the reception of couriers, who convey letters from one part of the country to another, where we obtained excellent bread and water, at times a very acceptable repast! The facilities given to correspondence from one part of Europe to another, are quite unknown in this country. Public dispatches, official and private letters, are all conveyed by men who travel on foot, and are relieved at every village; and although they walk day and night, the communications are necessarily tardy, being forty days between Caracas and Bogotá; their bags seldom appeared very burthensome.

We had now to pass a *Paramo,* called *El Zumbador,* or Hummer. ———, in his former passage, says of it:

"We commenced the ascent of the *Paramo,* "justly called *El Zumbador,* from the incessant "violence of the wind upon its summit. The "ascent occupied us several hours, and is in "some places rendered extremely dangerous "by the narrowness of the road and strength "of the wind, which frequently threatens to "hurl both mule and rider into the abyss below. "We suffered most sensibly from the cold, and "more from the wind, which was almost irre-"sistible, and would often drive the mules "sideways several paces."

The approach to it was extremely grand from the increasing size and magnificence of the mountains, but as they were perfectly free from clouds, and the sun shone with great brightness, we did not suffer at all from the rarity of the atmosphere, or the usually boisterous wind. On its summit, which we gained at one o'clock, the thermometer was only at 60. Indeed, I felt disappointed at so easy a passage, having prepared for the usual difficulties. The view from

hence was truly grand, comprehending an immense tract of country, and terminating in a *sierrania*, or chain of mountains, which to all appearance were the highest from the level of the plain of any we had seen, not excepting the *Silla* of Caracas: their course laying from S. W. to N. E., and like, in the *Silla*, the mountain in the centre being the highest. After a long descent by a stony and difficult road, we reached a solitary house, called *Los Caneis*, where we had intended stopping for the night, but found it previously occupied by a party of troops, who, in charge of a commissary, were conducting money and stores to La Grita: the latter was much disposed to be quarrelsome, and as sufficient time had not elapsed to obliterate the recollection of our loss at La Playta, we thought it expedient not to expose ourselves to a similar misfortune, and we proceeded a league and a half farther, in perfect darkness, upon a most rugged road; we arrived at another lone hut ten leagues from whence we started in the morning. The poor people were in bed, and not a little alarmed at hearing so many voices; but no sooner were they apprised that we were *Ingleses*, than the door was opened, and we received a hearty welcome; here we had barely room to sling

our hammocks, in a room where there was a man ill of a fever; nevertheless, after the fatigues of the day, we slept soundly. *Savannah Larga,* the name of the place, is prettily situated in the mountain. A small *conuco,* attached to the cottage, furnished the family with an ample stock of coffee, maize, plantains, and potatoes; here with the least industry, the poorest may live in comparative plenty.

29*th March.* At half past six we continued our journey through a very interesting, fertile, and well cultivated country. The valley, which widened as we approached the village of Tariva, is well watered by the river Tormes, and is extremely picturesque. The situation and advantages of this district appeared to me such as would recommend it to colonists, as there are large portions of fine land in want of cultivators. The valley is bounded by the same *Cordillera* we observed from the *Paramo,* its lofty summits re-appearing above the clouds. We stopped at a house at the entrance of the village, the owners of which had formerly received —— with much hospitality, and we experienced from them the same treatment.

At five P. M. we left Tariva, having waited the arrival of our baggage and spare mules, those we had ridden in the morning being perfectly fagged. The road runs north of the village, and when we had attained the summit of the eminence which commands the whole extent of vale, the sun was just setting, throwing on this lovely landscape a variety of tints that greatly enhanced its already grand and interesting effect. We advanced in obscurity for two hours, and at eight we reached the village of Capachio, distant three leagues. Eighteen months ago a public school on the Lancasterian plan had been successfully established here, by a priest named Mora, for the education of the youth of the village, many of whom had made considerable progress in reading and writing. We learnt with much regret that this most useful establishment had, for some reason, been broken up. The first and most important object in this country should be the education of the rising generation; that alone can eradicate the apathy and laziness of the present inhabitants, who moreover labour under the disadvantages common to all Catholic countries. To carry into effect a plan for general education, which might be done gradually, and at a comparatively small expence;

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and at the same time, with the concurrence of government, to distribute translations in Spanish of the Bible, and a few other useful works, would be one of the greatest benefits that could be bestowed on this tractable, but priest-ridden people, and worthy the magnanimous efforts that have already been made, by some persons in England, for the good of Colombia.

30*th March.* As soon as the moon rose we continued our journey. On our way we passed the village of San Antonio de Cucuta, at three in the morning, and a little beyond crossed the Tachina, a river that divides the immense province of Venezuela, of which we have now traversed six hundred miles and upwards, from the kingdom of New Grenada. Heartily glad were we at four o'clock to take possession of an empty house in Rosario de Cucuta, having completed a fatiguing journey of twelve leagues in the last twenty-four hours; our hammocks were soon slung, and overcome with fatigue we slept soundly till noon. This brings me to the close of another division of our journey; and I assure you, the prospect of a day or two's rest is most comfortable.

I shall conclude this letter with a comparative view of the population of this province in 1804, accompanied by an extract of a letter, lately addressed by Baron Humboldt to the Liberator Bolivar, on the estimated population of the whole of America in the year 1822:—

In 1804, Venezuela contained,

In Varinas	500,000
the Government of Maracaibo	100,000
——— Cumana	80,000
——— Guiana	34,000
——— Margarito	14,000
	728,000

The proportion of which were

2-10ths Whites	145,600
3-10ths Slaves	218,400
4-10ths Free	291,200
1-10th Free Indians	72,000
	728,000

Statistical calculations on America, from a letter addressed from Paris, by Baron Humboldt to Bolivar, the Liberator and President of Colombia:—

Extent of Territorial Superficies in square Leagues of 20 to the Equatorial Degree.		Population in 1822.
Mexico, or New Spain	75,830	6,800,000
Guatimala	16,740	1,600,000
Cuba and Porto Rico	4,430	800,000
Colombia { Venezuela	33,700	900,000
Colombia { New Grenada	58,250	1,800,000
Peru	42,150	1,400,000
Chili	14,240	1,100,000
Buenos Ayres	126,770	2,000,000
Possessions of the Spanish Americans	372,110	16,400,000
United States	125,440	10,200,000
Brazils	256,990	4,000,000

The above superfices have been calculated with much care from maps corrected by astronomical observations: the computations having been verified both by myself and Mr. Mathieu, Member of the Bureau of Longitude. The results differ from those contained in the table published in 1809, and inserted in the Political Review on Mexico, in which the inhabited districts were alone calculated, not including the desert tracts belonging to the various tribes of independent natives. The extent of each country to its most distant limits, is now measured, which the respective populations may one day occupy.

The population of the various parts of America, belonging to the Spaniards, is very

uncertain, nevertheless, each branch has been carefully examined according to the latest data, that have come into my possession. This statement should be looked upon in the same light as the others published by me on America; that is, as an attempt, which ought hereafter to be perfected. The Statistical divisions can only be brought to perfection and accuracy by degrees, in the same manner as the component parts of the Meteorological and Astronomical Tables.

Proportions that may assist in a comparison.

Spain contains 16,094 square leagues of 20 to the degree—or, 2,854 toises—making 5,572 metres.

The whole of Europe contains 304,710 square leagues.

The whole of Southern America consists of 581,891 square leagues.

(Signed) HUMBOLDT.

SOATA, 11th April, 1823.

Rosario de Cucuta will ever be famed in the annals of Colombia, as the town in which the first general Congress was held, and where the Constitution was formed. In 1820 the deputies of Venezuela and New Grenada assembled here; their session lasted three months, and was held in the sacristy of the parish church. You will readily imagine that our first pursuit, when refreshed from a fatiguing journey, was to visit this memorable spot. At present there is nothing to commemorate this important event; but the church in which it took place is by far the neatest, and in the best preservation of any we have hitherto seen. The architecture is somewhat in the moorish style, and would do honor to a country more advanced in the arts. It is kept in the nicest order—the least respect that can be paid to its important history. Amidst a quantity of trash, it contains a painting by a Mexican artist of the name of Paez; the chief figures are a Madonna and child, evidently copied from Raphael's *Madonna del Pesce.* The execution surpasses what one might expect in a South American artist. It is the offering of a late bishop of Caracas, and was painted in 1774.

The appearance of the town, in the centre of which is situated the church, is extremely pleasing; surrounded by rich *haciendas*, in excellent condition, it is, as it were, in the midst of a delightful garden. The perspective at the extremity of each street terminates in beautiful vistas, with high mountains in the back ground. The town, which is not large, lies N. and S. and is in itself neat and well built. It has not suffered from the earthquake that desolated the neighbouring province; the houses, though not large, have a clean appearance; the streets are paved, with a current of water running through the middle. The population is proportioned to its size, and they appear to indulge in much amusement and gaiety.

One of the greatest curiosities we have met with in this country is a hot spring, distant from this town about a league, in a N.W. direction. We made a point of going to see it, and have again to regret the destruction of our last thermometer, by which we could accurately have ascertained the heat. The centre of the spring being in the middle of a swamp, prevented our trying it where the heat must necessarily have been the greatest; but from the bubbling which appeared on the surface, the water was evidently in a state of ebullition. The surplus water finds a drain under ground and re-appears at

twenty yards distance; of course cooled in a degree by its passage; but even here the heat is so great, that you cannot bear your hand in it many seconds. The spirits of wine thermometer only indicated heat as high as 120° to which it immediately rose on being immersed. I have no doubt, that in the middle, an egg might be boiled. It evidently partakes of mineral properties: iron, I should think, both from the taste, and the ferruginous sediment that is left in its course. It is singular that vegetation is remarkably strong immediately round the spring. When its properties are correctly ascertained, it will in all probability be of important use. At present it excites no attention.

The inhabitants appear to be very fond of dancing; every evening they assemble in the square to the number of fifty or sixty, and figure away with great animation to the most deafening music, by the light of paper lanthorns, and the glare of innumerable segars. The chief instruments are calabashes filled with Indian corn, which are rattled to the thrumming of guitars.

We found provisions much cheaper than in Venezuela, and tolerably abundant. Grapes are grown in the neighbourhood, of a very good quality; the first we have met with on our way.

Money is proportionably depreciated; the doubloon, for which we paid eighteen dollars and a half at Caracas, here only circulates for sixteen.

2*nd April.* Having rested two days at Rosario, and effected a change of baggage animals, with an addition to our riding stock, we left it this morning at 9.

From a gentle rise west of the town, there is a very pretty view of Rosario, and San Antonio, embosomed in *haciendas;* the latter is in Venezuela, the former in the kingdom of New Grenada. The road from Rosario de Cucuta, in each direction, lies through verdant avenues. We passed rich plantations of cocoa, cane, coffee, and cotton. The latter was only introduced here in the year 1782. It thrives in almost any soil, provided it be dry, and sheltered from the north winds, which are most destructive to it. It is allowed only to grow to the height of six feet, and its numerous branches are covered with pods containing the cotton which envelops the seeds. The same plant will produce several successive years, by being properly pruned, but it is more generally the practice to plant fresh stocks, which always give a larger quantity.

The church is a conspicuous and picturesque object from the eminence above mentioned. The first part of the road was a very steep and rocky ascent, after which we traversed a level tract of great fertility. The soil is generally light, but good, and it might with ease be cleared of the useless shrubs which at present monopolize it. I should think it well calculated for the vine, which is already brought to perfection in the neighbourhood, although to a limited extent. A great deal of rain having fallen during our detention, we were apprehensive that the river would have been impassable; however we affected the passage with no other inconvenience than a wetting. A short ascent brought us to a beautiful plain, about a mile in extent, another most favoured situation; its only produce however are useless herbs, which hide a multitude of snakes. The small village of Carillo is situated at the extremity. Here we took up our abode at an *hacienda*, the owners of which, are proprietors of the plain. The house where we lodged is one of the best in the route, but in common with the rest, almost void of furniture. The only fault to be found here, is the abundance of serpents of different denominations and sizes, with which the place is infested, as well as those tormentors, mosquitos; of the existence of the latter, our

persons afforded evident proof the following morning; and the country people do not stir out after dusk without flambeaux to scare the former.

3rd April. Besides coffee, plantains, &c. the estate averages a crop of 250 mule loads of cocoa, which at the present reduced price of all agricultural production, owing to the stagnation of commerce on the side of Maracaibo, is worth 3,500 dollars. The house and hacienda are let at the low rent of 500 dollars. We proceeded towards the source of the river San José, which runs through these grounds. We were continually climbing and descending rough steeps incumbered with huge loose stones; the pass however is very fine, with the river at the bottom rolling its accumulating waters over a rocky bed. On either side the defile, the mountainous woods rise to a great height, with masses of rock obtruding through the trees. Our curiosity to see a serpent was for the first time gratified this morning, the pathway being obstructed by one. We succeeded in killing him, after firing three times in truly sportsman-like style, that is, at a *long* shot; he proved to be what the natives call a "*Caçador*," between six and seven feet in length, the head and half the body yellow, the tail part black.

A new road has been made within a year or two from Carillo to Pamplona, the only effort of the kind we have met with. We traversed a very tolerable wooden bridge thrown across the *San José*, and commenced a very fatiguing and long ascent leading to a table land, surrounded by mountains partially covered with pasturage, and small cultivated spots inhabited by poor Indians; the mountains rising one above the other, terminate in an azure and cloudless sky, which appears to rest on their aspiring summits. On the left of us appeared at a great depth, in a beautiful verdant vale of meadow land, the village of Chinacota, the most picturesque object imaginable, and greatly resembling drawings I have met with of Swiss scenery, although I imagine this to be on a grander scale. At this spot we were at a great elevation above the level of the sea, having for some days gradually, though almost constantly ascended; this is indicated by the rarity of the air; we are still making a due southerly course among the ramifications of the Andes. The exuberant fertility of the soil is very remarkable, from every inch of which, vegetation appears to shoot with irresistible force! We stopped for the night at a lone house, about five leagues from Carillo, at a place called Gallenazo, where we obtained cane for the mules, a fowl for

ourselves, and were served with the same ready alacrity we have invariably met with.

4th April. We proceeded early the following morning along a gradual rise; the chain on either side receding, presented partial, but luxuriant cultivation, and some quantity of cattle of a remarkably fine breed. The village of Chopo is placed on an eminence, the approach being by a sloping meadow of considerable extent, well stocked with horses and sheep. The neighbouring country produces, in consequence of a moderate temperature, wheat and maize, with a variety of fine vegetables. We made an excellent breakfast upon a fowl, fresh eggs, and milk, and two fine pines, which cost the moderate sum of *one rial!* On leaving the vale, the road which winds round the mountain is comparatively good, commanding extensive prospects, with occasional specimens of good tillage, and a rich soil. On turning one of these eminences we suddenly came in view of the city of Pamplona, placed in a vale about a league in extent, and hemmed in on all sides by high hills of variously coloured earth. It was a perfect panoramic scene of no ordinary beauty. The town is large, and divided into squares, similar to Caracas, the streets running at right angles; a great many churches enliven the

effect, and to each house is attached a portion of garden ground, which at a distance have a very pretty appearance. The surrounding fields are enclosed by stone walls in a regular manner, giving an air of *proprietorship* which is not often met with, but exhibited little vegetation, it being the winter season. Several streams run through the vale from north to south. The very picturesque effect from the distant eminence, was hardly realized on descending to the town; for many of the houses are abandoned, the streets overgrown with grass, and gardens neglected. Contrary to our plan, we staid a whole day here, having met with an old acquaintance, Colonel Lyster, with whom we took up our quarters, and were entertained most hospitably. There are no less than ten churches and convents here, a sufficient reason in itself for the existing poverty; added to which, it has been made a military station, and at present is a depôt for invalided soldiers, upwards of 300 of whom are in the different hospitals. We visited the convent of Franciscan nuns, thirty-two in number, who have the reputation of being very rich. In the church there is the most splendid altar piece imaginable, as rich as gilding can make it, and of very handsome workmanship. A multitude of paintings decorate the walls, but none of any merit. The

Colonel happens to be a favourite with the sisterhood, and receives frequent presents from them; during our stay they sent some excellent preserves, for which they are very celebrated. The cathedral is a good deal ornamented, but the only article of merit or taste is a painting of St. Francis. The artist's name we could not learn, but the work is much in the style of Velasquez. The rest of the convents are vacated, and the churches contain nothing remarkable. We visited a Colombian family here, who are emigrants from Cucuta, in consequence of Morales' advance; the females were the most favourable specimens of their sex that we have had the fortune to meet with. This is considered a very cold place, and in fact we felt a considerable change of temperature, the average during the day being about 60°, and in the night as low as 42°.

Within two days journey of this town, are the gold mines of *Veta*, mentioned by Humboldt, they have not been regularly worked for the last century, but the Indians occasionally bring grains to sell of a considerable size. The commandant told us that last year he had forwarded a solid piece of gold to the capital, weighing upwards of six pounds. We understood there were mines of copper and silver immediately adjoining.

The population of Pamplona is about 3200, amongst which are many objects frightful from the *goitres*.

6th April. It was nine in the morning of the sixth before we left Pamplona accompanied by Colonel Lyster. The country assumes a sterile appearance, excepting only the spontaneous growth of a variety of mountain shrubs, such as myrtle, box, acacia, &c. Our route lay south through the same range that we have been long traversing; the first part was a steep ascent, but the road unusually good, owing principally to the nature of the soil, a species of *mica*, so brilliant, as to have all the appearance of silver.*

At the distance of two leagues is a delicious spring of water issuing from the mountain, as cold as if it were iced, and of excellent flavour; even in a country where the water is so good, this was peculiarly grateful. On the summit of a mountain, at the distance of three leagues from Pamplona, and just above the small village of Cacuta is a lake of small dimensions, where the

* The existence in Venezuela of a mountain of this substance, of a gold colour, was the cause of all the fables and researches for the celebrated El Dorado.

river Apuré has its source; we did not observe any outlet, consequently its waters must filter through the soil till they form the small current observable at the foot of the eminence. The village is a miserable hole, encompassed by a barren soil; nevertheless, we observed some fine cattle feeding on the mountains. We continued the same course, constantly ascending and descending lofty eminences, which extended to the right and left, and although mostly barren, forming a grand scenery from their diversity of shape and outline. It was nearly dusk when we arrived at the village of Chitagá, a distance of nine leagues, situated on a high spot, commanding the vale. Although the *Alcalde* put half the village in requisition for our service, we fared but badly, and our animals worse. The hooping cough has committed great ravages here; indeed, it is surprising how any of the children survive who are attacked by it, owing to the mode of treatment, and total absence of medicines and medical aid; spirits, and the strongest astringents being the usual means of *cure* resorted to. We were told that Bolivar intended making this a position of some importance, but its want of natural resources seems opposed to such a project. The chief support of this place is grain and potatoes, with little pasture, natural or artificial. The climate is cool,

the max. in the day being 65°, and min. 48°, during our stay.

7th April. We had been told to prepare for a formidable undertaking, in the passage of the *Paramo* Almocadero. Leaving Chitagá at an early hour, we began the ascent for the most part gradual, and on a good road. Nothing can be more dreary and sterile than this tract, often losing sight of Chitagá; at the expiration of five hours we gained the summit of the *Paramo*, without any other inconvenience than chapped lips, from the extreme rarity of the atmosphere. The sun shone with cloudless splendour, and the glass did not fall below 62°. It is not however fabulous or imaginary, that inconvenience and even danger are often experienced in traversing it, so great is the exposure to the inclemency of the atmosphere, to which many a traveller has fallen a victim, and is now buried on its summit. Human bones were even then lying about, and some hundred rude crosses, erected by the passing traveller, either to commemorate the fact of a friend *emparamado* (a victim of the Paramo,) or a grateful offering at his escaping its danger. In all probability this is the highest spot we have gained in our journey, and I regret not having the means of ascertaining the elevation with precision. An hour and a half of gradual descent brought us to a farm

house and *Pulperia*, where we proposed remaining the night, as there was good pasturage in the vicinity. We again had occasion to remark the beauty of the cattle; multitudes of goats skipping on the mountains, flocks of sheep, and a quantity of breeding mares. Hatójurado is the name of the place. The glass fell to 52° during the night. The following morning we found that the heat of the sun, and rarity of the air had more than usually scorched us.

8*th April.* Hence we proceeded at an early hour, through a stony valley, difficult and disagreeable for man and beast. At the distance of a league and a half we passed the small and miserable village of *Serito*, elevated a little above the river *Tequia;* and at another half league *Servita*, something better, but poverty-stricken withal: from the latter to the village of *La Concepcion*, we observed a gradual improvement both in respect to fertility and cultivation, and a corresponding increase of cattle. In passing through the village we recognized an acquaintance made at Pamplona, Gaetano Garcia, the Curate, and at his invitation we halted during the heat of the day. Our worthy host deserves the most favourable mention; to his hospitality he united every useful and moral quality. Under his auspices the small village

and its inhabitants are in a state of amelioration. Several new houses are in progress; a school is established for the education of the children of the villagers; his usefulness extends also to a knowledge of medicine, a qualification as essential as it is rare to be met with here; his literary acquirements, and unbigotted generous sentiments, render him agreeable in society. His house, kept in the neatest order, and pleasantly situated, is a most desirable resting place for travellers. It was with regret we left him late in the afternoon to pursue our route. The aspect of the country improves considerably on leaving the village; the valley well cultivated with sugar-cane, maize &c. is watered by the Tequia. At a short distance from the village is a considerable formation of sulphur, which impregnates the surrounding atmosphere. The proprietor derives no advantage from it, but entirely neglects it. We had not an opportunity of visiting it, having mistaken our road, and instead of going to Llano Anciso, found ourselves far advanced towards Malaga. It being too late to return, we gained the latter, a considerable village situated midway on a sloping mountain of great elevation; the land is in full cultivation, and divided by hedges nearly to its rocky summit; abundance of fine cattle and horses were feeding in the pasture which encompasses it. The

Alcalde furnished us with a lodging where the only nuisance was such a progeny of half starved pigs, that it was with difficulty our animals could, even with our assistance, secure a part of their rations from their undaunted assaults. Whether from curiosity or respect I know not, but we were visited by a large portion of the population, all eager to exert themselves in our service.

9th April. The following morning we had to make good the ground lost the preceding evening; we descended by a winding and steep road to the village of *Llano Anciso,* situated in the midst of cultivated fields of sugar-cane and maize, on a sloping bank gradually declining to the river Tequia, which we crossed by a bridge of rude and tottering workmanship; the population of this village suffered exceedingly from the *goitre.* The deformity caused by this disease is really extraordinary, its victims having little the appearance of human beings; and it has gained such an extended empire in the country as to engage the attention of the Government, who have urged the Legislature to decree a handsome premium for the discovery of a cure or antidote to the evil. In riding through the village, we were repeatedly saluted with *miru! no tienen Gotos!* which signifies, see

they have no *Goitres!* thus, happily for its victim, this disease is considered by them as rather ornamental than otherwise! Continuing along the defile, narrowing by degrees, the country gradually loses its appearance of fertility, until it terminates in arid and rocky mountains, through which the Tequia continues to wind. The sun now became exceedingly powerful, and we had no resource but that of proceeding to Capitanejo; we therefore crossed by a steep ridge of mountains, from this into another parallel chain, at the bottom of which was a river, and from thence gained a second range of still greater elevation, from the summit of which we had an extensive view of the vale of Capitanejo, running N. and S. and watered by a rapid and considerable river, the Chichamache; the left bank is well cultivated with sugar-cane, which gives it a lively appearance, and forms a pleasing contrast to the dark and barren mountains which rise on the other side. During the whole of our journey I have not felt the heat half so oppressive as in crossing these ridges. At two o'clock we reached the village, nearly melted by a cloudless and vertical sun. The population of this village does not exceed 200 to 250 souls, a large proportion of which are rendered most unsightly from the before-mentioned disease, and a species of *ele-*

phantiasis which swells their limbs to a most unnatural size. The heat varied from 82 to 86 degrees during our stay here, a great transition from the temperature we had lately experienced. We were entertained here with a new species of vermin, *cucurachos*, about the size of a large beetle, which found their way into the hammocks. A new church has lately been built here, and a pretty bridge thrown across the muddy river; the water was intolerably bad, the only place where we have found it so.

10*th April.* We took our departure at an early hour, our way lying across the bridge, and followed the course of the valley about a league, accompanied by the rapid and muddy Chichamache; leaving it on the left, the road winds up a high pass; the more we ascended the more the soil improved, and on the summit, which it took us two hours to gain, the cultivation is considerable; a short descent brought us to Tipacaque, an estate belonging to a convent of nuns, but now occupied by the director of posts, where we staid during the heat of the day; the chief produce is sugar-cane, corn, and maize, enjoying a temperate climate and rich soil. In advancing further, we had some extensive prospects; the road was diversified with various wild flowers of great beauty, amongst

which, different sorts of box and myrtle were pre-eminent. In the course of the day we shot a great many doves. The approach to Soata is one of the most imposing sights imaginable. At the back of the town, which is situated midway on a sloping eminence, the land divided by hedges, like the sections of a map, is cultivated to the very summit. The mountains here appeared to concentrate their chains, forming a vast amphitheatre of prodigious height and magnitude; one mass rises above another till their heads are lost in clouds. A storm was pending over their dark summits as we approached the town, and the effect of the thunder, rolling from one chain to another in the distance, was extremely grand. In itself Soata possesses little worthy of note. We availed ourselves of the invitation of the *Alcalde*, to make use of his house, where we received every civility, but being attended by several of his family, who were most unsightly victims to *goitres*, neutralized all pleasurable feelings. We were detained here a whole day in procuring a relay of mules to conduct the baggage to Bogotá, which last division of our journey I will describe in my next.

BOGOTA, 25th April, 1823.

12th April. A short distance from the town of Soata we met a detachment of seven hundred recruits, commanded by Col. Manby, who were marching towards the line of operations round Maracaibo. I believe that we have now passed the most difficult and elevated spots in this extensive branch of the Andes, in which we have been immersed thirty-one days; the mountains are gradually diminishing. The bridge over a river which we had to pass, having been carried away the preceding night by the violence of the mountain torrent, we were obliged to make a *détour*, to reach the village of Susacco, about three leagues distant, where we made a halt to give time for the baggage to come up; and were most hospitably and generously entertained in the house of Madame Calderon, a very superior woman. Far from being able to induce her to accept any recompence for her kind reception, she said that one of her greatest pleasures, as she conceived it to be her duty, was to administer to the wants of travellers, especially when they were foreigners! At three we proceeded gradually to ascend a mountain, which was cultivated in all directions; a number of cottages being scattered about, to each

of which was attached from ten to twenty acres of land, producing wheat, potatoes, &c. of very good quality. Before we had gained the summit, a heavy storm came on, which soon rendered the road so slippery, it being a clayey soil, that with difficulty our animals could keep their footing, which forced us to take shelter for the night in a small hut by the road side; the cold was very intense, and with impatience we waited for day-light to proceed on our journey.

13*th April.* The next morning our road continued very slippery and dangerous, particularly during the remainder of the ascent; the country on either side is remarkably fertile, each cottage being surrounded with corn lands, in a clean and thriving state. We had a long descent to the parish of Satiou, where we arrived between nine and ten; its scite is on an elevated plain, backed by a semi-circular mountain of considerable extent and height, presenting every appearance of a rich and prolific soil, although imperfectly cultivated. It being Sunday and market-day, the village, as is customary on such occasions, was all bustle; there were assembled in the square from twelve to fifteen hundred persons of different classes and avocations. In one corner the commandant was ex-

ercising the militia—the *ne plus ultra* of all awkward squads! and who went through their evolutions with characteristic *leisure*—in another the country people had assembled with their various wares and produce; while others were pouring into the church at the call of the Sacristan's bell. A most striking improvement was observable here, in the comparative absence of the *goitres*, which have attended us through so large a portion of the country; indeed, amongst the crowd, we did not fail to distinguish some pretty faces, half enveloped in blue mantles, with which they cover their heads and shoulders, a straw hat surmounting it, blue petticoats and sandals made of cord; the *tout-ensemble* is not unlike the style of dress of the Welsh peasantry.

The temperature here was moderate and agreeable.

At the distance of half a league is another small village of the same name, only called the *pueblo*, or town. After a trifling advance, we were again compelled to seek shelter for the night in a miserable *pulperia*, by the road side, in consequence of an approaching storm, and the badness of the roads. I doubt if we have been as badly lodged elsewhere. In a small

hovel, the half of which was occupied with our luggage, we had barely room to suspend our hammocks, the country people, who were overtaken by the storm in their return from mass, and the Sunday festivities, were pouring in like drowned rats, and occupying the outhouses and *pulperia,* solacing themselves with *guarapo*. Not without difficulty could we procure any pasturage for our train of twenty-two mules; towards night the family came creeping into the hut—men, women, and children, about a dozen of them, besides dogs, cats, and poultry, all pigging together.

14*th April.* The rain having ceased, we were glad to be off at an early hour; a gradual and slippery descent brought us to the river Chiquito—a mountain stream running with great force. At Soapagá, distant two leagues, we fed the mules, and continued our course for Serinsa. Thus far there is a striking difference between Venezuela and New Grenada; the former is more wooded, less peopled, and, generally speaking, more fertile, but as we now gradually leave the chain of Andes, the soil is better cultivated; numerous huts and cottages present themselves, each of which possesses a portion of ground more than sufficient to support the inhabitants; the roads continue to improve as

we advance. We descended into the vale of Serinsa, presenting a different aspect to any of the varied scenes that have occurred during the journey; the contrast is most striking—an extensive and perfectly even flat, varying from a quarter to half a mile in breadth, is bounded on each side by a range of moderately high mountains of arable land; the valley is in general cultivation, and remarkably fertile, producing fine crops of maize, wheat, beans, potatoes, peas, &c. all of which were in a state of spring-like verdure, and cultivated with the utmost regularity and cleanliness. Verdant meadow lands intersect the tillage; the river Serinsa (lower down called the Chiquito), slowly winding through the midst, with a placidity more resembling "the soft-flowing Avon," than a mountain stream in America; the whole extent of the valley, which with different windings may be three or four leagues in length, is extremely well peopled; many of the cottages were adorned with flowers, and very neat; the land belonging to each individual is partitioned off by mud walls, or hedges, giving a further appearance of civilization and independence, and the pasturage is abundantly stocked with sheep, oxen, and horses. It is upon the whole a most interesting tract, and gives a favourable opinion of the kingdom of New Grenada. We

took a slight repast at the house of the village curate, which is about half-way in the vale. According to his account, the parish contains a population of upwards of 3000 persons. In the early part of the revolution these people made extraordinary exertions in the cause of the patriots. When Bolivar arrived with his army, worn out with fatigue, from the banks of the Apure, they clothed them—remounted their officers, and a great part of the cavalry, and supplied them with necessaries at their own expence. Its known patriotism brought upon it, during its subsequent occupation by the Spaniards the greatest hardships, and contributions out of number. It was late in the afternoon when we left the *parochia*; at the distance of half a league is the *pueblo* of the same name, and it was quite dark before we had half completed the evening's march. We had infinite difficulty in proceeding, owing to the intricacy of the road, and although we met a great many persons returning towards Serinsa from a neighbouring market, they were all so completely *énguarapado* (drunk with guarapo,) that we could obtain no sort of information from them. We reached Santa Rosa late in the evening—three leagues from Serinsa—where we found the people in a similar state of intoxication, and we were obliged to take forcible possession of the *Alcalde's* house. The village

is large and populous. We were awakened at an early hour by a continuation of the evening's revel, the *Alcalde* having a *pulpería* attached to his house.

15*th April.* The country continued very fertile and well cultivated. At the distance of two leagues is Duitáma, a small straggling village, in a rich and productive plain, enclosed by distant heights, among which was pointed out to us the field of Bargas, where the Spaniards received, from its consequences, a most important defeat from the patriots, commanded by Bolivar, who, with a force of 900 men, great part of whom were English, badly armed and equipped, and almost overcome by a harrassing march from the banks of the Apure, completely routed the enemy, who were 4900 strong, possessing a body of 600 cavalry, well mounted, besides artillery, the whole well provided, clothed, and fed. From hence passing a defile in the mountains, the road opened into an extensive plain abounding in large herds of oxen, sheep, and horses, and consisting entirely of pasture land without any trees. Having traversed about three leagues, we rested for a few hours at the village of Paypa, in the house of the commandant, Mr. Monroy, who treated us with the greatest hospitality and

attention. This village was the head quarters of the Spaniards previous to the affair at Bargas, which at the expiration of a few days, was followed by the more decisive battle of Boyacá, and the consequent occupation of Santa Fé, by the patriots, on which occasion Bolivar entered in triumph. In the afternoon we proceeded along the plain, which has nothing remarkable but its barren aspect. On the road we met Col. Jackson proceeding to take command of the division we passed on leaving Soatá. At the distance of four leagues we quitted the road, and crossing the plain, arrived at the village of Tuta, where Mr. Monroy recommended us to pass the night. We were received by the curate, Antonio Guevara, with the greatest cordiality; he was brought up in the college of Bogota, and was contemporary with Mr. Zea. This man, superior in information and in liberal sentiment to almost any of his countrymen that we have met with, is doomed to pass his days in a small sequestered village: his most pleasurable moments are those in which he can enjoy the society of foreigners and enlightened travellers, passing from and to the capital, the number of which is however limited, owing to the village standing at a distance from the high road. The conversation of this christian-like and charitable man was highly interesting. Known to most of the leading characters of his country,

he gave us many pleasing anecdotes regarding them, and described with great energy the events of Bárgas and Boyaca, and the enthusiasm which the name of Bolivar inspired. Witness also to the atrocities of the Spaniards, under Boves and Morales, he related circumstances of cruelty committed by them, which would be hardly credible had he not been himself an eye-witness of them. It seemed as if he could not sufficiently load us with attentions. We had not been in the house five minutes before sweetmeats and chocolate were served—in a short time cakes and liqueurs—and afterwards a substantial supper; clean beds were also prepared—a luxury we had not enjoyed except in Valencia.

The curates in catholic countries, more than in others, are, in consequence of the unlimited power they possess over the minds of their parishioners, either the most useful and valuable class of men, as in the present instance, or on the contrary, destructive of every social tie, when they abuse the confidence with which, by virtue of their avocation, they are invested. It was late the following morning before we left this amiable character, who is an honour to his profession.

16*th April.* Reached Tunja, a distance of

four leagues, at one o'clock. This town, which is the capital of a department, is situated on an eminence, and seen at a considerable distance; surrounded by stony heights and swampy meadows. We had gained a day's march upon our baggage, for the purpose of devoting it to seeing this place, which we understood to be worth attention, but were disappointed on a nearer acquaintance. The *Alcalde* quartered us on a person of the name of Baños, who is in the habit of receiving all the English who pass; and that most hospitably, if we may judge by the attention we received from himself and daughter. The only manufactory we have seen in the country, is one belonging to him, of saltpetre, with which he supplies the government works at Bogotá; the premises are extensive, and formerly gave employment to upwards of 200 men. The earth, from which the salt is extracted is found in abundance in the vicinity, but its proportion is small, being about one *arroba* in one hundred of earth. The little chemical science he is master of, was acquired from a French gentleman, of the name of Jolivet, who was made away with by the Spaniards, as was their custom with all men of ability, whose influence in society they very justly (from their vicious system of government) dreaded. In the height of their power the difficulty of ingress

was so great, that very few Europeans got beyond the coast. No one could embark for Spanish America without the king's permission, which was never given but for commercial undertakings, and then only for two years. To foreigners it was never granted, but under very heavy taxes, and then they were not allowed to go into the interior. There is little worthy of notice in the town, excepting the churches and convents, of the latter there are five, two of nuns, and three of friars. We could not see any of the former, of which Santa Clara is the principal—a rich order. The monks are of the orders of St. Francis, St. Dominick, and *Juan de Dios*, they were civil in shewing us all that was to be seen in their respective monasteries, the ornaments of which consist chiefly in a profusion of images and gilt work, very rich but gaudy, with a great many pictures, the plurality being mere trash, but containing some *few* of merit. A Magdalene in the Franciscan convent is amongst the best. The parish church is well worth visiting, as it contains several very old pictures of merit, apparently by Spanish masters. The architecture of these edifices is of the simplest, and frequently the rudest kind; the portal to the Parochia is however an exception, it is carved in stone, and of tolerable execution. St. Juan de Dios is

converted into an hospital for the military and poor of the place. Of all religious orders, this is probably the only one that is at all useful to society. One of their professions is the science of medicine, which they study in its different branches, and give advice and medicine gratis. During our stay one of the monks visited Sōr Baños; he had lately arrived from the army in Quito, where he had been filling the office of Surgeon General; he served in the same capacity during the campaigns in Venezuela and New Grenada, having held that post ten years. I should not omit to mention the *Colegio de Boyacă*, or public college, lately established here, wherein the higher classes are taught philosophy, mathematics, and divinity, and for the poor of the town is established a school on the Lancasterian plan. We visited it while the boys were there, and were struck with the regularity with which it is conducted, as well as the fine appearance of the youths, sixty in number, several of whom had made considerable progress. The temperature very pleasant, varying from 58° to 70°. but in taking exercise, we all experienced an oppressive sensation at the chest from the rarity of the atmosphere.

18*th April.* Left our kind host at nine in the morning; the country still open and bare, but

very susceptible of cultivation; at the distance of two leagues we reached the memorable field of Boyacá, where the Spaniards of New Grenada received their death blow from the redoubtable Bolivar, aided by his brave British Auxiliaries; the respective positions were pointed out to us by an inhabitant of the place. The Spaniards had their centre in a plain, protected in front by a small river and ravine; their right occupied a rising ground, beyond which was the bridge of Boyacá, defended by the artillery; here it was that their position was first forced by the English troops, who gained the bridge, and charged up to the mouths of the guns, all of which were taken, together with the Spanish general, Barreira, his staff, and a large number of prisoners. Thus have we visited, what, in future ages, will in all probability be looked upon as the classic ground of Colombia, Carabobo! Bargas! Boyaca!

Beyond this, the country assumes a much better aspect, spontaneous vegetation re-appears, the roads are good, and free from stones, the soil in cultivation, and tolerably peopled. We halted at the village of *Venta Quemada*, and dined. It deserves no other mention, than that it possesses an obliging and civil *Pulpero*.

Starting again late in the evening, we had a most delightful ride by the light of the moon, the night being mild, and the roads as even as in any gentleman's park in England. We passed a valley about midway, charmingly situated, and susceptible of the highest cultivation, and there are many well arranged farms, in one field we counted no less than twenty-one ploughs at work!

Completed our ninth league on arriving at a place, called La Pila—a lone house where we were obliged to pass the night; the only place we had to put our heads into was a small *venta* or shop, where our hostess served out *chiché* (a fermented liquor made from maize and honey,) in liberal potations to some thirsty *peons* who had possession of the apartment. The servants having missed the road, we found ourselves without hammocks, and were driven to the alternative of perambulating and star-gazing the whole night, or roosting in common with the hostess, servants, children, muleteers, &c. on the damp earthen floor—fatigue decided in favour of the latter alternative, in spite of the effluvia arising from fermented liquor, rancid meat, &c. with which the hut was furnished. Wrapped in our cloaks we took our stations in the midst, and had almost forgotten the disa-

greableness of the situation, when at midnight the servants arrived, and we had the satisfaction of getting into our hammocks, suspended over numerous sleeping beauties—and beasts!

19*th April*. We left La Pila the following morning, and arrived at the village of Alto Viego without any thing remarkable occurring; hence the country widens considerably, and presents a rich flat well cultivated with wheat and other grain, to the very summit of the hills. A great many houses are scattered over the plain, and it presents altogether an aspect of plenty. At the village of Chocontá, which is in the midst of the plain, pleasantly situated, we stopped to dine. At two o'clock we continued our route through a fertile country, and by a gentle rise, we reached a height from whence we had a fine prospect of the vale of San Vicente: it is more extensive than even the valley of Caracas: the view from the above is lively and picturesque, as much of the country seen from hence is pasture land, well stocked with cattle of every description, and watered by the river Bogotá. At a distance are the villages called the Pueblos. We descended to the plain, which in some parts is very marshy, consequently well stocked with game, especially herons of beautiful plumage, some of which we shot. As it grew dusk we sought for lodging

in the house of the curate of a small village, called Esquelé, about a mile off the main road, and learnt here, by a Bogotá Gazette, that the meeting of the first National Congress had commenced. A messenger was dispatched to the capital to prepare lodgings for us, having heard how difficult it was to obtain a house or apartments, owing to the influx of strangers and deputies. It was near twelve the following day ere our baggage came up, without which we could not proceed.

20*th April.* We reached Guachasipá, one of the Pueblos, and finished the day's journey by halting at another village, about a mile beyond it, called Tocunsipá—a stage of only three leagues. A large portion of the plain continued to present a marshy surface, but with the advantage of the river winding through it a little trouble and expence would render it capable of cultivation; the rest is well stocked with wheat, potatoes, &c. At ten at night —— left us, for the purpose of proceeding to Bogotá, and arranging matters before our arrival. We followed the next morning at an early hour, with a view of reaching our destination in the evening.

21*st April.* From the bridge of Sopo we

had a distant view of a large village, called Zipaquirá, where there are very valuable salt mines, belonging to the government—thence, turning the foot of a range of hills that run N. and S. we entered the line of plain, that conducts to the capital. It is of considerable width; the horizon still bounded by distant mountains, and the flat presenting an appearance of high cultivation; in the midst runs the river Bogotá; the scenery was highly pleasing. We passed a rich *hacienda*, presented to the Vice-President Santander by his friends since the Revolution. The circumstance is commemorated by an inscription on the portal. Our approach to the capital (which we caught the first momentary glimpse of from an eminence four leagues distant from it,) was announced by different parties of equestrians who we met riding at full speed (the accustomed pace) on small but active horses—mules being comparatively out of use, excepting for travelling. We overtook our baggage at the village of Susaquia, distant only four miles from Bogotá, where it was agreed that we should await a messenger from ——; here we took up our quarters at the Alcalde's, who we found a very obliging man; from hence we had a splendid view of the plain which extends in front of the capital;

on this side of the river are very fine corn lands.

23*rd April.* Owing to the express which was sent to urge us to proceed immediately having missed us, we were detained here till this morning, when we started at an early hour, more and more astonished, as we advanced, at the neglected state of the valuable land that actually joins the capital, and the bad state of the roads.

Thus, at the expiration of *two months*, we entered the capital of the Republic, Santa Fé de Bogotá, not only in good health, but really without any sensible fatigue, from so long but very interesting a journey.

BOGOTA, 10*th June*, 1823.

After a stay of nearly two months at the Capital, it is probable that recent occurrences will render it necessary for me to return to Europe; but, as the time of my departure is dependant upon circumstances over which I have no control, I will no longer defer sending you such particulars of Bogotá as I have had time to commit to paper.

Not having succeeded in procuring a house, owing to the great influx of deputies and strangers during the session of Congress, we were all kindly received by a friend, until such time as we could suit ourselves with one, at a small *Quinta* delightfully situated on the *Alameda* or public walk, which forms one of the principal entrances to the city. The road is enclosed on either side by fragrant hedges of rose bushes, and a variety of wild flowers of luxuriant growth. It is the usual promenade on Sundays and festivals. The members of the Government, the Senate and Congress, gentry and *mobility*, assemble here indiscriminately, either on foot or on horseback.

At the expiration of a week we fortunately succeeded in engaging the principal part of a house, in the *Calle de St. Juan de Dios,* where we have each a good bed room, an office, and eating room; in the centre is a small court planted with pinks and roses, round which an open gallery communicates with the respective apartments, the usual style of building in this country, and generally convenient on account of the heat. The usual scarcity of furniture is as apparent here as at Caraças; we have with difficulty succeeded in procuring a bedstead each, a table, a few chairs, and matting for our rooms, but being as well off as our neighbours, have no just cause of complaint.

The first Sunday after our arrival, it being the customary etiquette, we paid our respects to the Vice-President Santander and the ministers Gual, Castillo and Restrepo. In the absence of Bolivar the executive authority is vested in the former, who occupies the palace of the late Viceroy, which excepting the state apartments, is far from astonishing one with its splendour, or architectural beauty; it is in fact a very humble edifice, inferior to many private houses. General Santander has every appearance of being an affable and gentleman-like

man with a good person, and the manners of one who has seen much of the world. Sōr Gual, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, is considered to be a man of talent, and has perhaps, more weight than any other in the council of ministers. Castillo bears a character of great integrity, joined to extensive knowledge, and easy eloquence; he is the minister of the *Hacienda* (Finance); Sōr Restrepo, of the home department, also a polite, and well educated man, is at present charged with a compilation of a history of the revolution; and as he possesses, in virtue of his office, the most authentic documents, it may be looked forward to as a genuine narrative of facts. General Briseño Mendez is the minister of war, and is also very well spoken of. Besides the above, we visited the Bishop of Maracaibo and Merida, a member of the senate, and at present the only mitre in the Republic; for although Bogotá and Caracas are each Bishoprics, they are now vacant. He is a reverend and respectable looking old man, zealous in the support and interest of the church, and as I am informed attentive to foreigners. General Oudinetta, the President of the senate, also bears a very respectable character. We likewise visited Dr. Peña, formerly the Judge of the *Alta Corte*, (High Court,) a man of extensive information and agreable manners.

As the capital of a republic of such great extent, situated in the heart of the immense continent of South America, the site of Bogotá is peculiarly advantageous, both as regards its comparative facility of outward communication, and its singular advantages of climate, soil, and picturesque position.

The communication with the Caribbean sea, by the Rio Grande (Magdalena) is very expeditious; neglected, as all the roads in this country are, at the present time, it is only a three days journey to the town of Honda, situated on the east bank of the Magdalena, from whence the post generally reaches the coast in seven days, owing to the extraordinary velocity of the current—to ascend, the disproportion is immense! It is not at all uncommon, after the rainy season, to be delayed from fifty to sixty days, in navigating from Santa Martha to Honda, a difference that at first appears hardly credible, but the fact affords of itself some idea of the force of the current; this tedious method of travelling is however likely soon to be remedied, a contract having been made with the government for establishing steam vessels on the Magdalena, at the same time to form a new road to communicate with the capital, and canals which are to connect the cities of Carthagena and

Santa Martha with the Magdalena; although from the magnitude of the undertaking, some doubts are entertained of its being carried speedily into effect. On the other side, running in a north-easterly direction, is the river Meta, emptying itself into the Orinoco, at about one hundred leagues from the Atlantic, by which the communication is equally rapid, in proportion to the distance. From the capital to the Meta, is a journey of three or four days, which, in addition to its greater length, of course leaves a decided preference, as far as the commerce of Bogotá is concerned, to the navigation of the Magdalena.

The advantages of the climate are most striking, situated within the fifth degree of north latitude, Bogotá enjoys a temperature that is singularly constant, and agreeable; during the whole time that we have been here, the thermometer has never varied more than five degrees, that is, from 58° to 63°, and we have nevertheless had frequent changes of weather; for the first fortnight it rained continually, when the minimum was 58°; we have since had beautifully clear days, with warm sun; in the same position, the thermometer has not been higher than 63°. The cause of so moderate and agreeable a climate is of course attributable to the great

elevation of the table land upon which the city is situated, being 8615 feet above the level of the sea. The consequence is an extreme rarity of the air, which, for the first week is very oppressive to all strangers, causing a difficulty of breathing, and an unpleasant sensation at the chest. After a few days however one becomes accustomed to it. On exposing yourself much to the sun here, it takes greater effect upon the skin than in warmer climates; I experienced this to a great degree, one day that I rode to the falls of Tequendama; in twenty-four hours the skin pealed off my face, although at the time I had felt no inconvenience from the heat.

This city, which is in 4° 6^{m} N. Lat. and 78° 30^{m} W. Long. is built at the foot of one of the highest mountains in a range of eminences, running in an amphitheatrical form, nearly from N. to S. It is a little elevated above the extensive plain that lies before it, bounded again by variously shaped mountains, at a distance of about thirty leagues. This plain, from the extreme richness of the soil, might be a perfect garden; that part immediately joining the town, is formed into *Potreros*, or places for grazing cattle, but by far the greater portion is either common, overgrown with shrubs, or marshy ground that might be drained with great

facility, as the river Bogotá serpentines through the centre of the plain, about three leagues distant from the city, which has assumed its name. It was originally called Santa Fé, to which was added de Bogotá, but since the expulsion of the Spaniards, it goes solely by the latter title.

There exists a difference of opinion upon the superiority of site of Bogotá, some preferring that of Caracas; but I think the former is decidedly preferable, especially as the climate of Bogotá is more adapted to English constitutions, and is favorable to greater bodily exertion.

The two lofty and rocky mountains, that I have before mentioned, at the back of Bogotá, said to be 17,000 feet above the surface of the sea, are called Mont Serrat and Guadaloupe; they completely shelter the town from easterly winds, and are the means of its being well supplied with water. On the summit of each is a convent, where the natives ascend on certain days in the year, and I am told monks are sent there for penance—such it certainly must be, for their summits are more frequently in, than out of the clouds. I undertook this journey one morning, and never was more gratified, than with the view of the city and plain of Bogotá, and the amazing variety, and

beauty of the mountain shrubs that grow at the back. It is a perfect botanic garden; the ascent is very circuitous and difficult of access.

Several persons have agreed in informing me that the population of Bogotá exceeds 35,000; the streets always appear well filled. There is, however, a larger proportion of monks, nuns, and clergy, than in any other part, or perhaps in the whole Republic combined. When seen from the mountains at the back it has a very pretty effect. The streets, all built at right angles, have an appearance of great regularity, and have a stream of water constantly flowing in the centre; there are, also, several handsome public fountains. Great as is the extent of the city, I think I am not much out in computing that the churches and convents cover one half of the ground. There are no less than *thirty-three,* which, with their respective domes and towers, very much enliven the view of the city, although essentially they must prey upon the industry and property of its inhabitants. These are really the only edifices that distinguish themselves. The religious mania has now happily subsided, and the people of Bogotá, excepting only the populace, have thrown off the yoke of blind and tacit obedience, with which the Spanish Govern-

ment, made them vassals of the priesthood, (thereby keeping them both in subjection and ignorance,) and are become independent of its power, and the belief of their infallibility. Many of the convents are in part, and others wholly deserted since the Revolution; nevertheless there is still a redundant number of drones! The ground that some of the convents cover is immense.

The streets are generally narrow, all of them paved, and the principal ones have foot-paths. By far the liveliest, and built with the greatest regularity, is the *Calle Real.* The ground floors of the houses are occupied by shops, with one story above, each habitation having a large wooden balcony painted green. This street is well paved; and as there are no carts, or vehicles of any description, the traffic being hitherto exclusively carried on with mules, it does not require frequent repair. At the extremity of the *Calle Real* is the principal square, where the daily market is held; one side being occupied by the palace, the other by the custom house, the cathedral and its offices.

Bogotá is well supplied with all the necessaries of life; meat, vegetables, and poultry, are

very abundant, but there is no fish. With the exception of pines and *granadillas*, the fruits are neither so fine nor so plentiful as in warmer regions, notwithstanding they enumerate thirty different sorts. Articles of luxury are rare, and very expensive. Very tolerable French wines, however, were to be had during our stay, at the rate of five to six shillings a bottle; but at present it frequently occurs that the stock is exhausted before fresh supplies arrive. European manufactures are likewise sold; but generally at extravagant prices, and often of very inferior quality. The following articles will give some idea of their relative value.

A Hat, 16 dollars.
Pair of Boots, 16 dollars.
Coat of inferior Cloth, 30 dollars.
Superfine Cloth Coat, 60 dollars.
A dozen of common Tumblers, 10 dollars.
Do. common Cups and Saucers, 9 dollars.

The principal merchants of Bogotá send to Jamaica to purchase their stock of goods.

The costume of the inhabitants is singular, especially that of the women. A lady of the first importance and a common person dress in the same style when they walk out. A black gown in the Spanish fashion; a square piece of blue cloth which covers their heads, and hangs down to their waists; with this they generally

envelope themselves, so as barely to leave the face visible; over it they wear a large black beaver or silk hat, with a very broad brim. This at first sight has a most singular and *outré* appearance; the ladies allow it to be a barbarous fashion, but want courage to break through the custom. About the feet, as with their peninsular progenitors, there is considerable coquetry. The common people on certain occasions are very smart; but as the women of this class, as well as the men, are bare-footed, their bugled and lace-trimmed dresses appear very much out of character. The peasants, over other garments, wear a full kind of mantle called a *roquilla*, formed of a long square of cloth, or striped cotton manufacture of the country; a hole in the centre admits the head, and it falls loosely over the shoulders, completely protecting the body. The arms being hid, it gives the wearer a very indolent appearance, but it has a certain degree of elegance from its hanging in easy folds.

As far as I had an opportunity of judging, Bogotá is the most justly celebrated place in the whole Republic for beautiful women. The change is the more striking, after the hideous population one meets with in many of the towns and villages in the great extent of

country between the two capitals. It is not from a few instances that one is led to form such an opinion; the majority of the female sex here being fairly entitled to this reputation. From the coolness of the climate their complexions are naturally fair, and very clear. They inherit at the same time the fine expressive dark eyes, and regularity of features, of the Spanish women, although partaking but in a slight degree of their elegant figures, owing to the careless manner of dressing, and setting off their persons. However they have pretty feet, and an easy carriage, for which the former are greatly distinguished. One cannot help being struck at this agreeable change; but from so great a superiority of personal appearance, there is the more to regret in the absence of those endowments of mind and conduct, that alone render beauty permanently attractive. The illusion is here destroyed by the absence of both! There are perhaps few cities (it is to be hoped so at least,) where the women are so generally depraved; and although there are, no doubt, individuals of uncorrupted morals, and virtuous conduct, it is too evident that their number is but small.

The heavy rains having in part subsided, my curiosity was much excited to visit the celebrated

Salto, or falls of Teguendama, while augmented by the great increase of the waters. I left the city at day break, crossing the plain in a south-westerly direction. At the distance of three leagues and a half is the village of Soacha, situated in the plain, and encompassed by fertile corn lands; from hence to the river Bogotá was about half a league, where I was obliged to leave my horse, and cross the river in a canoe, it having overflown its banks to a considerable extent; the width might be about that of the Thames at Chelsea. Having engaged a guide at the village, we were both accommodated with fresh horses at an *hacienda*, to enable us to complete the expedition. The road from this lies across the ridge of mountains which forms the boundary of the plain in the south-west, from the summit of which there was a grand view of the low land; a large portion of it being inundated, had all the appearance of an extensive lake, with variously shaped hills rising abruptly from its waters. The horizon on the opposite side of the plain, formed by a long range of eminences of various heights, was very picturesque. This fall is one of the world's greatest wonders, probably the most extraordinary of its kind, even in this country, where we constantly see nature in her grandest, and most fantastic forms; from the river to the fall is a distance of

about a league. Having ascended the heights, the country becomes all at once most luxuriant in wood, and wild shrubs of peculiar beauty; a long, and winding descent succeeded through a dark thicket, from whence, at a considerable distance, you first hear the roaring of the waters; a quarter of a mile from the *Salto*, we were again obliged to leave our horses, and descend by a precipitous path-way to the brink of the precipice; but how can I convey to you any idea of the tremendous sight it offers! The river I before mentioned, having wound through the plain, contracts at this point into a narrow, but deep bed, not exceeding forty feet in breadth; the banks on either side are clothed with trees through which it flows with increased force, owing to its confined limits. Imagine yourself placed at the edge of the precipice, on a level with the bed of the river, and distant from it about fifty yards, you observe this immense body of water precipitated to the depth of *six hundred and fifty* feet, with indescribable force, into a capacious basin, the sides of which consist of solid perpendicular rock. It is almost presumption to attempt the description of a sight so sublimely beautiful!

This overwhelming body of water, when it first parts from its bed, forms a broad arch, of a

glossy appearance, a little lower down it assumes a fleecy form, and ultimately in its progress downwards, shoots forth into millions of tubular shapes, which chase each other more like sky rockets than any thing else I can compare them to. The changes are as singularly beautiful, as they are varied, owing to the difference of gravitation, and rapid evaporation, which takes place before reaching the bottom. The noise with which this immense body of water falls is quite astounding; sending up dense clouds of vapour, which rise to a considerable height, and mingle with the atmosphere, forming in their ascent the most brilliant rainbows. The most conclusive proof of the extraordinary evaporation, is the comparatively small stream which runs off from the foot of the fall. To give you some idea of its tremendous force, it is an asserted fact, that experiments have more than once been made of forcing a bullock into the stream, and that no vestige of him has been found at the bottom, but a few of his bones. To give due effect to this mighty work, nature seems to have lavished all the grand accompaniments of scenery, to render it the most wonderful and enchanting of objects; from the rocky sides of its immense basin, hung with shrubs and bushes, numerous springs, and tributary streams add their mite to the grand effect. At the bottom

the water which runs off, rushes impetuously along a stony bed, overhung with trees, and loses itself in a dark winding of the rock. From the level of the river where you stand to witness this sublime scene, the mountains rise to a great height, and are completely covered with wood; and at one opening is an extensive prospect, which on a clear day encompasses some distant mountains in the province of Antioquia, whose summits are clothed in perpetual snow. Hovering over the frightful chasm, are various birds of the most beautiful plumage, peculiar to the spot, and differing from any I have before seen.

Another of the natural curiosities of this province, is a lake supposed to have been frequented by the early Indians for the purpose of worshipping their idols. It has ever been imagined that considerable treasure is deposited in its bed. An individual has lately undertaken to drain it, and has expended large sums of money in the process, but for want of funds he will probably soon be obliged to abandon the work. I saw at a gentleman's house in Bogotá an idol of solid gold, that had been recovered from this lake, it was about three inches in height, and resembled the objects of Hindoo worship.

Of all the religious edifices in this country, the cathedral of Bogotá deserves most particular mention. In any country in Europe it would be considered a handsome building, although far from being constructed on strict architectural principles. The design is however bold, and the general effect grand and imposing. The interior is built according to the Corinthian order. The nave is separated from the aisles by two rows of very massive pillars, six in each, the surface of which is a white composition brought to a high polish, forming a good contrast with their richly gilded capitals. Under a lofty dome in the centre of the building, the principal altar is raised, a splendid structure of dazzling brightness from the richness of its gilding. The choir which faces it at the entrance, is very spacious, and richly carved, with a profusion of gold work; various *capellas*, dedicated to different saints, surround the whole. They are very splendidly ornamented, and contain some good paintings, executed by a native artist. The various works that adorn the cathedral are all of his execution.

In a chapel, adjoining the same, there are a few very good paintings by Spanish and Italian masters.

The church of St. Juan de Dios has a full length Christ, also finely executed. This, and the Dominican convent are the most spacious of any; but I shall take another opportunity of describing the several religious edifices more minutely.

Unquestionably the principal object of interest and importance, both as regards the present, and future state of the Republic, is the national Congress; and I have to regret, that want of time has prevented my frequently attending the debates, as I otherwise should have done; I will however give you some idea of its institutions and prerogatives.

The national power is divided into three distinct bodies;—the legislative, executive, and judicial.

The legislative authority consists of the Senate and House of Representatives, the sanction of both being necessary to enact a law which may originate with either, excepting such as have a reference to contributions and imposts; these have their origin in the House of Representatives.

To pass a law, three discussions are necessary

in either house, with the interval of a day at least between each reading, unless in such cases as are declared to be urgent, when the latter regulation is over-ruled, and the first, second, and third reading may pass in three distinct, but consecutive sessions.

A project or proposition for a law having been thrown out from one chamber, cannot be presented a second time until the following year; and no law constitutionally determined upon in both houses, can have effect, until signed by the executive; should it think fit to withold its signature, the project must be returned to the house where it originated, accompanied by the proposed alterations, within ten days after its receipt. It then undergoes fresh discussion, and if approved by a majority of two-thirds of the members present, passes into a law, even without the signature and approbation of the executive—so that in fact, the executive has no *absolute* vote, nor even has it the power to propose a law, but only to present *matter* which is taken into consideration, and upon which a law may be founded; neither can the President, Vice-President, the Ministers of the High Court of Justice, Secretaries of State, Intendants, Governors, &c. form part of the legislative body, either as Senators, or Members of the lower

House. In fact, its powers are virtually restricted to carrying into effect the laws that are enacted.

In the general elections, each province names a Representative for every 30,000 souls; in any particular one, should there be an excess of 15,000, it appoints an additional member; this proportion of one Representative to every 30,000 persons will be in force until the number of members amount to 100—and although the population augment, the number of deputies will not do so, until the proportion corresponds to one for every 40,000; in this case they may further increase, until the number of Representatives amount to 150.

To become a Representative, it is necessary, besides possessing the qualifications of an elector, to be a resident, or native of the province for which you are elected, a two years residence in the country immediately prior to your election—to possess an estate of the value of 2,000 dollars, or an income of 500 dollars, or to be professor of a science.

Persons not born in Colombia can become Representatives, after eight years residence in

the republic, and on being possessed of an estate of the value of 10,000 dollars.

The house of Representatives has the exclusive right of impeaching before the Senate, either the President or Vice-President, and the Ministers of the High Court of Justice, in cases where their conduct militates against the good of the republic.

The election of a Representative is for four years.

The Senate is composed of Senators, elected for the different departments, each naming four. Their function lasts for eight years, but at the end of the fourth year, one half for each department are replaced by fresh ones, the seceding members being determined by lot.

Besides possessing the qualifications of an elector, a Senator must be thirty years of age, a resident, or native of the department, for which he is elected, and have lived in the republic three years immediately prior to his election. He must possess a property of 4,000 dollars value, or an income of 500 dollars, or be professor of a science.

Persons not born in Colombia must have resided in it twelve years, and possess estates to the value of 16,000 dollars, to become Senators.

The executive power is vested in a President, who must possess all the requisite qualifications of a Senator; he is elected for four years, and can be only re-elected once, without an intermission of one other nomination.

A Vice-President is also named, who performs the functions of the former during his absence, or in case of death or secession.

In the absence of both, the President of the Senate is the executive power.

To assist the President he has a council composed of the Vice-President, one of the ministers of the High Court of Justice, nominated by himself, and the Secretaries of State.

The constitution recognises five Secretaries, that for Foreign Affairs; the Interior; *Hacienda*, or Finance; the Marine; and Secretary at War; the two latter are at present united in the same person.

Each Secretary is the organ, through which the Executive delivers its orders to the Subordinate authorities; and it is the duty of either to give such information verbally, or in writing, to both Houses, as may be required of them, in their respective capacities.

The Judicial or third power in the state, is that which at present is the least defined; nor is it probable, from the present advanced state of the session, that the civil and penal code will be drawn up before the next meeting of Congress.

As it stands at present, the attributes of the High Court of Justice are—that at least five Judges shall be named for the election of *one*, three of whom are to be proposed by the Executive to the House of Representatives, who reduce the number to two, the Senate finally fixing upon the individual.

The High Court of Justice is to take cognizance of all contentions of Ambassadors, Ministers, Consuls, or Diplomatic Agents of all countries, which may result from treaties, or negociations, entered into by the Executive, and any differences that may arise in the superior tribunals.

Of superior Courts of Justice, and inferior Judges, the Constitution says, that for the present the Congress will name such as it may think necessary in the different departments, the Executive nominating for the approval of the "*Alta Corte,*" the chief Judges. The inferior ones to continue their functions, according to a temporary law, until such time as the Congress shall regulate the administration of justice.

This is a brief outline of the three constituent powers in the nation.

The discussions in both Houses are open to the public, excepting on such cases when it is judged expedient that it should be otherwise. This reserve exists less in the Senate, than in the lower House. The former is held in a large hall in the Convent of St. Domingo, the centre being railed off for members; the public standing at their backs without the partition, but sufficiently near to make it very inconvenient; at one end of the apartment is a kind of throne for the President (General Oudinetta), elevated above the rest, and decorated with silk hangings, and the arms of the Republic; on his right is a portrait of the Liberator Bolivar, placed there by order of the Congress. In an assembly of this nature, so recently established,

and composed of members who necessarily have not had great opportunities of witnessing the proceedings of more civilized nations, it would be absurd to expect much eloquence, generally the result of a finished education, and much practice in the art of speaking. The restricted means of acquiring knowledge during the old Government, and the recency of their institutions, will furnish a sufficient excuse; but, nevertheless, much pleasure and satisfaction may be derived from attending their debates. The principle which seems to actuate their endeavours, is a search after truth, and to administer justice in the most liberal point of view. In arriving at these desirable ends, there is frequently a good deal of extraneous argument, but their decisions are such as do honour to their endeavours, and prove that they are both conscious of the importance of the duty they have to perform, and the trust reposed in them. The speeches are mostly very short, but have the merit of generally bearing upon the point in question, without any attempt at rhetoric; it is, nevertheless surprising, the facility with which almost every member delivers his sentiments. In a new assembly, one naturally expects to find a diffidence and hesitation, where people express themselves for the first time in public, on subjects which require a certain degree of order and

analysis; but here it is done with all the ease of common conversation. The longest speeches I have heard have not exceeded twenty minutes; the general average may be from five to ten.

Among the best of the speakers in the Senate (of which there are but sixteen members present, the number consisting of forty,) is Sōr Soto, a man of very liberal sentiments, and of good understanding; he is looked upon as one of the ablest of that body. Mr. Hurtado is another who expresses himself with considerable fluency. But none exceeds in liberalism and independence Padre Breceno, member for the Department of the Orinoco. He seems particularly tenacious of any encroachment of the executive authority. He speaks frequently, and very much to the purpose. The old Bishop of *Merida* is very fond of giving his opinion on all subjects, consequently often loses himself, which never fails to draw upon him the mirth of the House; however he very good-naturedly and wisely joins in the laugh against himself. He is not one of those who facilitate the progress of business. D'—— said of him, "Il a été tres bon pour l'independence, mais, il est fort mauvais pour la liberté." However he bears an excellent private character, and is very zealous in the support of the church.

The Vice-President Torres is a man of tolerable eloquence and good reasoning, but rather too much inclined (according to report,) to the side of power. He has of late generally officiated, in consequence of the illness of Oudinetta, whose character stands very high for impartiality, and his opinions are generally respected. General Nariño, formerly Vice-President of the Republic, is a man of considerable talent, but during his administration, is said to have exercised his power with great severity. It is only of late that he has taken his seat in the House, in consequence of charges (emanating from an unknown source, but published in the *official Paper,*) having been brought against him, which, as they implicated his competency to hold the office of a Senator, it was necessary for him to disprove, before he could enter upon his functions. They amounted to an accusation of his having applied certain public monies to his own use, and of his having been insolvent, either of which would have been sufficient to have deposed him; but he succeeded in completely clearing his character before his judges, (the Senate,) of the accusations brought, anonymously against him. He made an attempt to form an opposition party in the Senate, being personally inimical to Santander; (a circumstance which must be considered as

unfortunate at a time when the greatest unanimity is absolutely necessary to ensure prosperity. A subsequent reconciliation has taken place between these *Magnates*, which has given general satisfaction.

The Legislature is deprived of the talent of two of its best orators, *Gual* and *Castillo*, they being in office as Secretaries of State. I had a favourable opportunity of hearing the former upon two occasions; the one on the expediency of granting General Bolivar permission to march to the assistance of the Peruvians, the other in vindication of a treaty entered into, of offensive and defensive alliance, with the Republics of Buenos Ayres, Chili, and Peru: on the former point, in particular he displayed great eloquence—pointing out the honor that would accrue to the Republic of Colombia, which had been the first to assert and achieve her independence, and would be the last to sheathe her victorious sword, while an enemy remained to be expelled, even from the territory of her allies. The policy of the measure was subject for difference of opinion, some considering it hazardous, that the *main-spring* of the Republic should be allowed to quit its territory, and be removed to so great a distance as Peru, while the enemy were in actual

possession of the principal points on the northern coast, making frequent incursions, and keeping a large extent of territory in constant alarm. This objection was combatted by Gual with great energy; he stated the probability of the subjection of the Patriots in the south, the Spaniards in that quarter being evidently superior at that moment; in which case, they would in all likelihood enter Colombia, and recommence the war. Of all the speakers that I have heard, he is decidedly the only one who may justly be considered an orator; he certainly possesses advantages which entitle him to the distinction; a good person, with a manly voice, and easy action; a great fluency of words, and, in theory at least, a competent knowledge of European Governments, and the principles upon which they act.

The sessions are held in the morning from nine till two, and again in the evening from seven to nine.

In the Chamber of Representatives there is more party spirit, owing to the larger proportion of clergy, who seldom take the liberal side of a question; the two ends of the house are denominated, the *mountains* and the *valley*; the former consisting of the liberals and some of

the priests, is by far the most numerous, and boasts the greater talent; and although the latter are less tolerant, it is justice to them as a body, to acknowledge that they are certainly actuated by a spirit of freedom and justice, that does infinite credit to the country. There have not assembled much above fifty members in the present congress; the number elected being eighty-five—the deficiency is chiefly in the deputies for Quito, very few of whom have arrived, the distance being so great.

The House of Representatives is immediately facing the Senate; they occupy a very long room, the centre being railed off as in the other; the President's seat is in the middle, opposite to which is a portrait of Bolivar. Here there are three Secretaries, all of whom are Members, and perform their double functions; they have not, however, yet arrived at the system of taking down speeches in short hand—a plan that would be highly beneficial; for when a man knows that his sentiments are to be laid before the public, he is naturally more cautious in his language. There are certain Committees formed, to whom all projects and petitions are referred prior to their being discussed; when their report is drawn up, the House generally enters upon the topic in rotation, unless any important

affair intervenes; and in cases where information is required from the Executive to elucidate a subject, the Secretary to whose department it refers, is invited to attend. He gives his explanations, but neither votes, or takes part in the debate, unless to enlighten the subject. In an assembly so recently formed, it is matter of astonishment the regularity that prevails. It is of rare occurrence that a member is called to order, the debates being conducted in an orderly and quiet manner—no personality is indulged in. I was present, for the first time, during an interesting debate on a petition presented by a student for the church, whom the Bishop of Popayan had refused admittance into holy orders, on account of his illegitimacy. The point for argument was, 1st. Whether an innocent person should be made to suffer for the crime of his parents. 2ndly. If the bonds of society and public morality would not be better maintained by visiting the parents with punishment and disgrace, than permitting the guiltless offspring to suffer through life the odium and disadvantages incurred, by being placed in an unfortunate situation, and to whom no blame could attach. The priests maintained, that the greatest check to vice would be given, by the children suffering the disadvantages arising from the parent's crime, because the strongest

tie in nature being that of parental affection; the consideration of the disgrace to be incurred by the child, would act as the greatest preventative of immorality on the part of the parents. This opinion was combated in the first place, on the manifest injustice of an innocent person suffering for the guilty;—upon the experience, not abstract theory of the question, whether such reflections are of sufficient weight, or if they effectually deter a man from error; and it was insisted that it would be a more expedient method to stigmatize the authors of the evil, and by some heavy punishment to make them feel the injury done to society. It is evident that the latter is the purest reasoning; but still it was pleasing to see that upon the main object, the views of all parties were directed to the same end—that of preserving the public morals in the greatest purity: the latter opinion was the most prevalent, and the petition was admitted.

Sōr Caycedo, the President, is a man universally respected; he is of one of the first families here, and fills the Chair with equal credit to himself and service to the country—whose interest he studies and promotes with all the disinterested zeal of an enlightened and just man—combating the narrow-minded policy of some individuals, who either through personal

interest or blind prejudice, would have done an irreparable injury to the credit of their country.*

Sōr Pedro Mosquera is perhaps the most fluent speaker in the Chamber of Representatives, and his reasoning is invariably in suppore of a liberal policy.

Dr. Palacio is also a very clever man, and of sound principle, and enlightened ideas.

Padre Santander is likewise quite the liberal, giving his decided support to the maintenance of a political system in Europe, which has so miraculously raised the credit of this country to so high a pitch: indeed none but the most inexperienced would have aided in destroying so noble an edifice.

The Secretary Herrera is a very clever man, and, as far as I can judge, the most correct speaker in the House. Col. Olivarez is another distinguished patriot and tolerable speaker; and Borreros' zeal yields to none in the support of a liberal policy. Amongst the priests there are some good speakers; but the greater eloquence is in the *Mountain.*

* The Author alludes to the discussion on Mr. Zea's loan.

Amongst the most important laws enacted this Session are—

1. One decreeing the universal adoption of public Schools throughout the Republic.

2. A law establishing a copper currency to a certain extent.

3. Another tending to encourage emigration to the soil of Colombia.

4. A decree of Government, facilitating the grant of lands to Colonists, with particular immunities.

5. A law authorizing the Executive either to continue, augment, or decrease the Naval and Military Force.

6. A law granting the exclusive right of navigating with Steam Vessels (the Magdalena) to certain individuals, under certain conditions.

I am, &c.

SANTA MARTHA, August 5, 1823.

The day after to-morrow is likely to be the term of my present visit to Colombia, after spending exactly six months in the country. I have engaged a passage by a small Schooner to Jamaica, whence I purpose taking the earliest conveyance to Europe.

But to resume my Journal; I left Bogotá on Sunday, June 22, at half-past three, P.M. passing through Fontibon to the village of Serresuela, a distance of five and a half leagues, where it was adviseable to stop, the mules being already fagged, owing to low condition;—both places are in the plain.

23*rd June.* Aided by a clear moon at half-past three in the morning, I proceeded towards Facatativá, entering the mountains west of the plain of Bogotá at half-past six; with great difficulty reached the *Venta* of Cerraderá at the foot of the *Paramo* of the same name, at Nine in the Morning. This is nine leagues from the capital, and 7494 feet above the level of the sea. As yet no sensible change of climate. The mountains are well wooded. I reached

Villeta at Six in the Evening. The road hither is actually appalling, constantly mounting or descending on a rough pavement, torn up by the violence of the mountain torrent, and totally neglected since its first formation. The mules with the utmost difficulty keep their footing, having to jump from one mass to another at the imminent risk of the rider's neck; or on the other hand, where the road has not been paved, deep ruts are formed by the constant traffic in wet weather, in which at every step the animals are immersed up to their girths. As an *agrèment de plus*, it rained incessantly for three hours during this stage; and I was thrice unhorsed in descending, (the last time in a bog) in consequence of having lost my crupper. There are some terrible passes between Caracas and Bogotá, but none to compete with this road from the capital to the point of embarkation on the Magdalena, and probably the most frequented in the country. Before the end of the day I found a great change in the temperature, having descended from an elevation of 7494 feet to 3498. The country is very luxuriant and picturesque. The only objects that attract attention in the village, are the women, who in spite of their *cream colour*, are particularly good looking. In the night the mininum of heat was 75°. It being the Eve of

St. John, parties of calabash musicians and noisy revellers prevented my getting much rest.

24*th June.* At three in the morning began a steep and fatiguing ascent, which occupied four hours, called the *Alto del Trigo.* The sun rose in golden splendour from behind an extended range of the Andes; the summits of the different heights were distinctly visible, and a beautiful azure sky, totally free from clouds, appeared to rest on their elevated summits; but the most striking beauty in this scene was derived from all the vapours having accumulated in the valley, and extending to about midway up the mountains, in the form of undulating waves of fleecy whiteness; the effect was the most singular of any thing I ever beheld, having all the appearance of a ruffled sea of snow—the variously shaped mountains looking like so many rocks and islands. No sooner had the sun risen, than his rays began to attract the mists, which gradually rising, displayed a variety of the most brilliant colours. In a short time the scene was totally changed, and the verdant valleys became clearly visible. I reached Guarduas, seventeen leagues from Bogotá, at nine, having driven my mule before me a great portion of the deep descent which leads to that town. The country continues very grand, but

not much cultivated. The town is prettily situated in a small and fertile plain. I was received by Col. La Costa, to whom I had a letter of introduction, with great kindness. I could not procure fresh animals until four in the afternoon, when desirous of reaching the end of my journey that evening, I left the town at the commencement of a very heavy thunder-storm; but before I could gain the foot of the mountain, the rain and hail came down with such violence as obliged me to shelter, and ultimately to give up the idea of attempting the ascent that evening. The additional guide, whom I found it necessary to bring with me from Guarduas, assured me that it would not only be useless, but extremely dangerous to proceed while the roads were inundated. I therefore reluctantly returned to the Colonel, meeting on the road the greater part of the inhabitants (decked out in all their holiday finery) scampering home in all directions. It being St. John's day, they had been enjoying their favourite sports, bull-baiting and cock-fighting, horse-racing, &c. in the neighbouring fields, when overtaken by the storm; it continued until late at night, accompanied by tremendous peals of thunder, and more vivid lightning than I had seen in any part of the Andes; the atmosphere was in a continual blaze for some hours, the effect being grand beyond description.

25th June. I set out about four o'clock. The descent to the plain, watered by the Rio Magdalena, exceeded in length any that I had experienced; it requires all the confidence given by practice, and the conviction of a mule's great caution, to enable one to drop from one bank or rock to another, with any degree of confidence. On gaining the flat the heat became oppressive, and I found myself again among the customary inhabitants of a warm climate; birds of most beautiful plumage, a great variety of wild flowers of brilliant colours, lizards, snakes, &c. The mule nearly trod upon one of the latter, of the most venemous kind, without my having perceived it, called the *coral;* its head and tail being of a bright red, exactly resembling that substance; the body a light brown marked with rings. At the top of a high bank, at the western extremity of the plain, the majestic Magdalena first opened to my view, winding between two chains of lofty and woody mountains; its width even here cannot be less than a quarter of a mile, and the impetuosity with which it flows is grand in the extreme. I left the mule at an Indian hut, and embarked in a canoe, for Honda, situated on the west bank, and reached the town at eleven o'clock—a distance of twenty-two leagues from the capital.

The first object of my search was a canoe, or small-craft, to ensure a speedy conveyance down to Mompox, but I learnt there was not one either for sale or hire; the only means of proceeding was by a *champan*, then taking in her cargo, and likely to depart in two or three days.

26*th June.* A constant breeze from the east makes this place supportable; the heat would otherwise be intolerable; at noon in the shade the glass is at 93—the mininum at night 80; the mosquitos are very troublesome, and a very diminutive fly, called *ejin*, the bite of which draws blood, and causes a much greater degree of irritation that that of the former. The site of Honda is pretty and romantic. Being the port to the capital, there is some commerce carried on, and a very considerable number of Indians and mules employed in the transport of goods. One is astonished at the weight some of the former will carry; the more so from the steepness of the mountains they have to ascend, and almost impassable state of the roads. There are men who carry from seven to eight arrobas, with which they reach Bogotá in eight days, earning from seven to eight dollars by their journey. The hire of a mule averages five dollars.

The river Guale joins its waters to the Magdalena in the centre of Honda; it is a broad though shallow stream, and rushes down with considerable force, rendering the passage to and from the town very hazardous. The consequence is, that all large boats, especially those that are laden, stop either at the Bogotá or Honda *Bodegas* (warehouses on either bank at about half a mile from the town,) whence the goods are sent to their respective destinations. A wooden bridge of considerable elevation is thrown across the former river.

29*th June.* After some trouble with the pilot, who did not like to risk himself in a small canoe, which I at last succeeded in purchasing, we pushed off from the shore. When all placed in this nutshell, with our baggage in the centre, the *Bogas* (rowers) and myself in the fore part, sitting between each others legs, and the pilot at the rudder, almost every inch was covered, it not being above twenty feet long; our safety required that we should remain perfectly still. In this condition we began to descend, the current running at least six miles an hour. By keeping steady, although the canoe was not more than four inches out of water, I conceived we were tolerably safe, until we reached the rapids, with which the first day's navigation abounds. These

are caused as well by the declivity of the river, as by numerous sharp turnings which it makes. In certain places the impetuosity of the stream is so great that it causes a number of conflicting currents, raising waves and eddies that threaten to engulph even much larger boats than ours. The first dangerous pass that occurs is where the river Guarinu falls into the Magdalena; the descent was rather nervous work, but from the buoyancy of our boat, a very few waves broke over us, and only wetted us a little. We passed all the other rapids, of which there are eleven, with equal success.

In the course of the day we passed the following rivers, which fall into the Magdalena, *Rio Negro*, *Rio Claro*, and *Rio de la Mien*. Also the two small Indian villages of *Guarumó* and *Buena Vista*, consisting each of about twelve houses.

To persons navigating this river in a conveniently rigged vessel, and so as to be protected from the heat of the sun, the voyage would be delightful and interesting beyond description, its course continually serpentining either through high chains of mountains, rocky passes, or the most luxuriant woods. We descended about seventy miles, from the morning until sun set, when it was necessary to moor our boat on a

sand bank to pass the night, for during the rainy season the Magdalena overflows its banks, inundating whole villages, and tearing up trees by the roots, which are carried down with the stream in such abundance as to render the navigation dangerous after dark. The waters at this time had begun to subside, although flowing with great violence. I believe it was never known to be higher than this last season, when a great portion of the town of Honda was under water.

After supper we spread our mats upon the sand, the starry heavens forming our canopy; the night was very hot, and rendered doubly painful, by swarms of mosquitos, the flitting of bats, and other nocturnal animals, about our heads, not to mention our dread of alligators and tigers; for although the former seldom leave the river in the night, it is difficult for a *novice* to be perfectly at ease, on a place where he has seen them basking in the day time; from the latter we were more protected, being isolated from the woods, and by our fire being kept up during the night. In addition to our imaginary evils, we suffered real inconvenience from a heavy storm which came on about twelve o'clock, accompanied by thunder and lightning. This left me no alternative, but to get up and sit in my cloak until day break,

under the partial shelter of an umbrella. Such were the features of our first night's *bivouac* on the Magdalena. The storm having ceased, we re-embarked at six. At noon in the shade, the thermometer was 82°.

30*th June*. We were saluted by the roaring of a tiger on the opposite bank; the first sound of the kind I ever heard, but not on that account the more agreeable; they rarely ever come down to the river but during the night, burying themselves in the depths of the forest in the day time. The tiger or *jaguar* of the country seldom attacks men unless provoked, but he is a formidable enemy to the *kayman* or alligator, which he frequently surprises when asleep on the banks, by springing upon his back; the alligator if a young one, is sure to fall a victim; the larger ones sometimes succeed in running with their antagonist into the river, when in his turn he is conquered by the numbers with which he is immediately surrounded. When the tiger has occasion to cross the river, before entering it, he sets up a tremendous roar, the *kaymans* immediately disperse, and he crosses in safety. Another inhabitant of this magnificent river, is the turtle, which abound in all parts of it, and which, as well as its eggs, deposited at certain seasons in the sand, are preyed

upon by both the kayman and tiger. At those periods the tigers come down in great numbers in search of them; large quantities are also consumed by the Indians.

After passing the mountainous district, the river continues gradually to widen on either side, overhung by very extensive forests. We reached the village of Nare, situated on the left bank, at half past eleven. It was here necessary to show our passports, and I thought it expedient to exchange the canoe for a larger one; the Indians continuing to assert the risk of proceeding farther in so small a boat, and I could no longer dispense with an awning, having suffered greatly from the increasing power of the sun; I succeeded in making an exchange for one that will carry me to *Puebla Viejo*. Left a loaded champan here, *thirty-one days* from Mompox, bound upwards.

A little below the village, the river Junta joins the Magdalena, after traversing a part of the province of Antioquia. Its stream hence to Garapata, a small Indian hamlet of twelve houses, is divided by several Islands, all of which are well wooded, and have a very picturesque appearance. A few Indian huts are likewise interspersed on the banks, the inha-

bitants of which subsist upon the fish of the river, and by cultivating small spots of plantains and cocoa; the cocoa nut tree grows wild all along the banks. At one of these cottages, we landed to form an awning of leaves. At Garapata the mats were spread upon the ground, and we slept till two, when the moon being up we again proceeded.

This day's work I reckon at sixty-five miles; the thermometer at noon in the shade was at 85°.

1*st July.* The morning so cold and damp that I was obliged to have recourse to a blanket and my capote; the dews during the night are very heavy. At day-light passed the small village of St. Bartolomé, stopping for half an hour to breakfast at the hut of an Indian. A little lower down, the river Nuevo joins the Magdalena. Made great progress in the course of this day, not stopping again until eight at night, having run at least one hundred and twenty miles. Maximum of heat 90° in the shade. The sun-set was one of the grandest sights imaginable; its rays falling on a high distant mountain, over which appeared a heavy thunder-storm; the blackness of the cloud being finely contrasted with the fiery red with which it was fringed.

Every night we have had thunder and lightning, more or less distant. The atmosphere in this direction appears to contain more electricity than in any part of the country I have traversed, the ignition was general in all directions.

2d July. At half past twelve the rising of the moon permitted us to leave our mooring, greeted as yesterday by the growling of a tiger, near the encampment. We dropped down with the stream at about six knots an hour, breakfasted at S. Pablo, and arrived at Badillo about six in the evening. To-day the river has increased very much in width, and the scenery has been extremely grand; it assumes, in its various sweeps, the aspect of a large lake, fringed with forest trees of great variety and beauty. There is a great abundance and singular variety of beautiful birds in these extensive woods, their movements affording constant novelty and admiration: the wild turkey, *guacharaca* (American pheasant), different kinds of cranes, flamingos, herons, great variety of wild fowl, parrots, macaws, and smaller birds of equally beautiful plumage, and hordes of monkeys, whose dreadful howlings keep the woods in constant uproar; snakes of all kinds are very numerous, and the Indians say, there are, as well as tigers, many lions, and some wolves; the butterflies are not

the least interesting, from their numbers and great brilliancy of colours

Nothing so much bespeaks the inadequate population of this country, as the neglected and wild state of so desirable a tract of land as that watered by the Magdalena, capable of growing the most valuable produce to exchange for manufactures, and with every facility for its exportation. In the space of some hundred miles that I have now descended, there are probably not more than thirty isolated and poor huts; none of which have above an acre of cleared land, over and above a few small villages.

The usual solitude has been broken to-day by the passing of several *champans*, laden with merchandize for Honda. The export of bullion being subject to a very heavy tax, the returns are mostly made in cotton, hides, sugar, and dye woods, those of the most valuable quality growing in this district; cocoa and coffee, are, comparatively speaking, little cultivated.

It is most laborious work for the *bogas* (Indian boatmen) to punt up these heavy boats; you frequently see twenty men at work with long poles, and it is by the utmost exertion they keep the boat in motion, so strong is the

current; indeed, in many places they are driven back and forced to regain the lost ground by the aid of ropes and pullies, which they attach to trees. Some idea of the force of the stream may be formed by the comparative time of the passage up and down. I now expect to reach Mompox in five days; to ascend from thence to Honda the loaded boats average from thirty-five to forty days. It is a pretty sight to see the Indians at work in *champans*; every thing proceeds with the utmost regularity, each man keeping time with his voice, so that they are heard at a considerable distance. When two boats meet, the salutations on both sides are most vociferous and abusive, each party endeavouring to surpass the other in the obscenity and opprobrium of their language; yet, when together, they appear to act in perfect concord. These men, in their manners and habits, are most disgustingly filthy—the beasts of the field have a much higher sense of decency! They have the character also of being great rogues, but I have no reason to complain of any of those I have had to deal with. It is surprising what work they get through. It may seem a solecism, but as far as my experience goes, I think in hot climates the natives are more capable of excessive fatigue, and exert themselves

occasionally in a more extraordinary degree than the labouring classes of the north. For instance, the enormous weights that some of the Indians carry on their backs up the mountains from Honda to Bogotá. A *boga* will work at the paddle (which is much more laborious than the oar) for sixteen or seventeen hours out of twenty-four, for a succession of many days, and exposed to a tropical sun. Having landed at Budillo with the intention only of preparing supper, and continuing our course all night, our plan was frustrated by one of those tremendous storms to which the tropics, and especially those parts where the large rivers are situated, are so subject. The thunder and lightning was most awful, accompanied by such torrents of rain and gusts of wind, that threatened to carry every thing before them.

3*d July*. The wind having abated by two in the morning, we were enabled to proceed.

In the course of to-day we passed the villages of Morales, Rio Viejo, and Regidor; we followed the course of the *Braço Ocana*, which branches off from the main body—a small stream leading from hence up to the town, from which it is named, on account of the current being stronger

than in the Magdalena; the two join again at Regidor. The heat to-day has been excessive, maximum 93°, without a breath of air.

By promising a reward I induced the bogas to proceed throughout the day, making one stoppage of half an hour, and also kept them at work the whole of the night, which proved very stormy; during this time we passed the villages of St. Pedro, Tamalanáque, El Poñon, El Banco, Tujayca, Guamar, Leira Margarita, Leira S. Fernando, S. Sebastian, and Mencogiquejo; likewise the river Cesare, proceeding from the lake of Zapatosa, and the Braço de Lobo, connecting the two principal rivers in the north-west part of the continent—the Magdalena and Cauca.

In the last thirty-four hours we cannot have made less than two hundred and ten miles, during that time we landed but once.* I never suffered so much from mosquitos as during the night; there is no describing the state of irritation caused by them.

4th July. At noon we reached the city of Mompox; thought it expedient to remain here

* These occasional delays are inevitable, to give the bogas time to cook their meals.

the rest of the afternoon, in the first place, to procure an additional boga, to replace the pilot, who had fallen sick, and to have oars made, with which we should proceed with more rapidity than by the paddle. I was informed that I could descend with safety in the same canoe to Pueblo Viejo, but not to Santa Martha; for which reason I proposed landing at the former place, and crossing with mules to Santa Martha, distant from thence seven leagues.

Considerable commerce is carried on with this city, it being the entrepot between the coast and the capital: all merchandize is sent by the river to Bogotá, at a very great expense. In the first place from S. Martha to Mompox, the charge is either five or six dollars per load, which consists of ten arrobas. Should the package be very bulky, something additional is expected; from Mompox to Honda, costs ten dollars more; and it may be reckoned that the land conveyance to Bogotá will amount to six or eight dollars; so that exclusive of duties, commissions, warehousing, packing, porterage, &c. ten arrobas, or 250lbs. weight of goods, will cost for transport only, from Santa Martha to Bogotá, between twenty-one and twenty-four dollars.

The city consists of three very long streets, running parallel with the river for at least a mile; the houses are generally large and commodious, but consist of one floor only. It is well supplied with all articles of provision, at moderate prices. The population, including the neighbouring villages, is estimated at 15,000.

Several gun-boats are stationed here for the protection of the navigation.

5th July. I left Mompox at day-break, having effected the alterations necessary for the completion of my expedition. Passed in the course of the day the village of S. Senon, S. Fernando, S. Anna, Talayqua, Pinto, Tacalon, Tacamocho, and, towards the evening, made the mouth of the river Cauca, where it joins its immense body of waters to those of the Magdalena, having run almost a parallel course with the same. For a river scene none can be more grand than the junction of these two majestic streams, whose waters seem to contend with each other for the superiority, and it is not till after a distance of several leagues, that the clearer stream of the Cauca is ultimately ingulphed in the more muddy Magdalena. At the point where they meet, the scenery is strikingly beautiful; the banks of each being

clothed with wood. The picturesque little village of Pinto, built in a grove of cocoa nut trees, and characterized by two mango trees in the centre (a peculiarity observable in most of the villages on the river) forms a beautiful object on the west bank, at the spot where the rivers meet. Fine rising woodlands to the S. W., and blue mountains to the north, add greatly to the grandeur and majesty of the scene.

At sun-set a heavy squall came on, obliging us to lay to for nearly three hours; the surface of the water became so much agitated as to have more the appearance of a foaming sea than an inland river. The pilot assured me, we could not proceed without imminent risk until the wind abated; heavy rains succeeded. We continued, nevertheless, to run down with the stream the whole of the night, having no longer any apprehension from sand banks, with which the river abounds above Mompox, and from its extended width the less likelihood of running foul of floating trees. In the night we passed S. Bruno, Plato, and Teneriffe, having run by midnight about seventy-two miles. The heat to-day was above all precedent; the thermometer under the shade of the awning at three in the afternoon being at 100°! the minimum during the night 75°.

The mosquitos increase, if possible, in number, and my body was in a state of general inflammation from their repeated attacks. As to getting sleep during the night, it is next to an impossibility, and instead of being refreshed in the morning after the heat of the preceding day, I rose in a state of general irritation.

6th July. At nine in the morning landed at Nivito, to allow the bogas to buy fish, and prepare their provision for the day. The intermediate village between this and Teneriffe, is S. Augustin, and after it, we passed Ducal, *Baranca Viejo*, *Baranca Nueva* (here is a branch of the river called El *Digue*, which conducts to Carthagena,) and Pedraca. At Ducal, were obliged to bring to at the signal of a gun-boat, and give an account of ourselves.

At noon the *Cierrania* of S. Martha appeared in sight at a great distance; the mountains are of an extraordinary elevation. Maximum of temperature to-day 92°. We passed the villages S. Antonia, Peñon, and Punta Gorda. An excellent opportunity presented itself for the first time of examining a kayman; I had before seen hundreds basking on the banks with their huge mouths open, and floating on the surface, but none sufficiently near to judge of their proportions. In the present instance, one of large di-

mensions was floating down the stream, its appearance fully justifying the dread entertained of them when met in their own element. Every part of this animal is covered with a thick scale of uncommon hardness, perfectly impenetrable to a musket-ball! It was at least fourteen feet long; the body five, the tail five, and the head four; the mouth of this crocodile being armed with from seventy-five to eighty teeth, and tusks which have a most formidable appearance. It was with much difficulty we succeeded in knocking out one of the tusks by the help of a small hatchet. It is generally of a dark brown colour, excepting only the belly, which is a pale yellow; and along the back, from the head to the tail, is a row of projecting pyramidal scales; its fore-feet are covered with the same hard substance, and armed with formidable claws, those on the hinder ones being much the largest. Nature seems to have provided against the too rapid increase of these monsters, for they fortunately destroy the greater number of their young as soon as hatched: like the turtle, they deposit and carefully cover over their eggs in the sand banks.

We continued our course the whole of this night, for the first time, being favoured by clear weather.

In the last twenty-four hours I consider that we have made one hundred and twenty miles; passed in the night Guaymaro, Remolino, and Sitio Nuevo.

7th July. When day-light appeared I found myself unexpectedly near the termination of my voyage on the Magdalena. This majestic river, in itself alone a mine of wealth to the luxuriant and universally fertile country through which it runs, surpasses, in its natural richness and grandeur of scenery, all that possibly can be imagined, studded with numerous beautiful islands, and receiving innumerable magnificent tributary streams, particularly the Cauca, an auxiliary of almost equal force and dimensions.

At the moment of quitting the sublime scene we entered a narrow strait, conducting from hence through a chain of small lakes to Cienega. The sun was rising behind the lofty *cordillera* of Santa Martha, giving additional splendour to one of the grandest views on the river. It forms here, as it were, an extensive lake; distant mountains appear in the south-east; in the east rises the chain at the back of Santa Martha, six thousand feet above the level of the sea. The tower of the church of Baranquilla is seen

in a neighbouring wood. The distant roaring of the sea, after an inland course of two thousand miles, brought with it the most pleasurable anticipations of the vicinity of that ocean which was to convey me to my country and my friends.

Upon entering the *Caños* we had a most tedious and laborious navigation of twelve hours, owing to the shallowness of the water, and the great obstruction from a weed which floats down from the Cauca, knitting together, and forming an almost impenetrable barrier. The Clarin is almost the first we entered, about two leagues in length; to this succeeds a number of other small lakes, called the *Cienega de quatro Bocas*, Guatinoja, de Soledad, Benja, de la Cruz, Canalete, Pascaro, Negro, Sucio, Redonda, and Honda, to *the* Cienega (a very extensive salt-water lake.) In the last twenty-four hours have not made above seventy-five miles; heat 90°.

It was dusk when we reached the Cienega, and the bogas having toiled three successive days and nights, it was necessary to allow them a few hours repose before we could cross to Pueblo Viejo.

8*th July*. At one in the morning unmoor'd; a high west wind rendered the passage of the

lake rough and inconvenient; being much exposed to the surf in so low a canoe.

Landed at Pueblo Viejo at six in the morning; precisely nine days from the time of leaving Honda. A *Bungo* having just left for Santa Martha, and no other conveyance offering until the following day, I had no alternative but crossing the country with mules, for which purpose sent an express to Pueblo Nuevo to have them in readiness. Went myself in the canoe to the Savannah, whence without loss of time proceeded to Santa Martha, distant seven leagues, which city I reached in the afternoon, after a burning ride over a sandy road, suffering excessively from thirst, and the heat, not only of the day, but from the constitutional one, contracted in a succession of nine days navigation on the river in an open boat.

Being unexpectedly detained here, affords me the opportunity of giving you some account of this part of the coast. ——— very kindly invited me to make his house my residence, but for which it would have been irksome indeed, for of all the dull towns I have been in, this surpasses them. An unoccupied man has no resource in S. Martha; the excessive heat, which is seldom below 90°, prevents your moving

about by day, and the only recreations are bathing morning and evening, walking either on the beach, or in extensive labyrinths of wood at the back of the town, which are cool and agreeable, although harbouring a great variety and abundance of snakes; they extend for some miles in an easterly direction, and are terminated by mountains of a great elevation, which gradually rise till they attain the height of 16,419 feet from the level of the sea: such is the elevation of the *Nevada*, so called from its being covered with perpetual snow! these form a back ground to the town, all of them clothed with fine timber or brush wood. The intermediate flat is interspersed with numerous *Rosas* or *Quintas*, where the fruits and vegetables are grown to supply the market; but as they chiefly belong to poor people, few of them are in any kind of order. Fronting the west is the port, open to the sea only in that quarter, otherwise surrounded by high land, and very strongly fortified. In the centre of the channel is the "Moro," a rocky mountain; a fortress on its summit commands the entrance on either side, besides several other fortifications, which if in proper order, and well manned, would render this one of the strongest holds on the coast. On ascending the headland, which protects the harbour from northerly winds, on the one side is a

highly picturesque and panoramic view of the town and bay; on the other a great extent of ocean, with the bold coast of *Terra Firma*, stretching to windward. We used very much to enjoy the freshness of the breezes on this spot, it being many degrees cooler than the town. Santa Martha is so hid by headlands, that it is difficult to make from the ocean, unless when running along the shore. The anchorage is safe, excepting in gales from the westward, which very seldom prevail; but when they do, the vessels are frequently driven on shore, but receive no damage, the beach being of fine sand, in which is a very large portion of some metallic substance; I was told platina, but think it much more likely to be lead, a mine of it having been discovered under the citadel, particles of which are probably dislodged by the sea.

The town is large, and contains several good houses. The cathedral is a very conspicuous object, both in the approach by land and sea, but neither in architecture or internal ornaments, is there any thing in it worth mention.

The population is very much reduced from a variety of causes, not exceeding at the present time from 4 to 5,000 souls; amongst which are the general desolation caused by the war, and

the number of families that have been banished from their adherence to the Spanish cause.

In the time of the Spaniards, this was a very considerable commercial city, enjoying almost the exclusive importation of manufactures for Bogotá, and a great part of the interior, owing to its ready communication with the river Magdalena. Now there are not above a dozen merchants of any note in the place, and the business carried on is comparatively trifling. The commercial importance of S. Martha has, during the war, been much injured by this circumstance, and might be perhaps permanently so, if a contract lately made by the government, with a gentleman at Bogotá, were carried into effect, for the exclusive privilege of navigating the Magdalena for twenty years with steam vessels, with the condition of forming a direct communication between the river and Carthagena by a canal, which is to be in progress within the year. This would tend to remove much of the trade from Santa Martha to Carthagena.

Before I left the capital, a measure was before the Congress, for making a free port of, and building a town at Savanilla, near the mouth of the river: strong interest was opposed to the

measure, but the ultimate decision appears dubious. If carried into effect, it will most materially injure both the above-mentioned cities, but prove at the same time a general benefit to the interior. It appears singular, that goods shipped direct from England, and well assorted for the market, cannot be sold at as low a rate, as those sent over from Jamaica, which have to pay additional port charges, commission, &c. It either arises from Jamaica being a kind of depôt for the manufactures of England: sales are often made there at a sacrifice to the owner, to ensure a quick return, of which the Jews, who are numerous in Jamaica, take advantage, and are thereby enabled to undersell other merchants, when the Colombians come into that market; over and above which, the latter in landing their purchases here, contrive to compromise for the duties with the officers of the customs; for such peculation it is well known has been, and probably is still carried on to a great extent. On the other hand, the English merchant, who arrives here with goods, is made to pay the full amount of grievously heavy imposts!

The returns made from hence are either in specie, to export which, a heavy duty is incurred; or else in cotton, hides, and dye

woods, chiefly the Nicaragua, or Palo de Rio Hacha.

The Governor told me that from the 16th to the 18th ult. Padilla was in possession of Maracaibo, Morales having evacuated it to prevent the junction of the blockading army with the force on the lake. The movements of Padilla occasioned the return of Morales, when not having an adequate force to resist his entry, Padilla retired from the town, carrying away with him, or destroying all the stores and ammunition, after razing the works, and spiking the cannon.

14*th July*. In the middle of the night, accounts were received, that after another severe struggle, in which there had been great slaughter on both sides, the city of Maracaibo was reoccupied by the Patriots; Morales' force being in a great measure destroyed, he escaped to San Carlos, where he is shut up with only 200 men. Street by street was defended by the Spaniards, before they were driven out. No sooner was this intelligence made public here, (at one in the morning) than the most noisy and boisterous rejoicings commenced in the town. The cathedral bells rung a deafening peal, which lasted until daylight; parties

paraded the streets, singing and knocking at all the doors; the military were let loose, and a general firing of musquetry took place for the rest of the night. The band paraded the streets, bonfires were made, and fire works let off in all directions. Such deafening discord, upon the whole, never was heard before!

15th July. To-day the shops are shut, and the rejoicings continue with unabated vigour.

16th July. The hilarity of the mob exhibited itself in the most extraordinary manner. In the evening a ball was given by the garrison officers, which afforded me an opportunity of seeing some of the principal families in the town. The women are of a dark colour, and generally speaking, plain, careless of their dress and person, and far from fascinating in their manners. The Spanish country dances and waltzing are most in favour with them; these were kept up with great spirit, and some degree of elegance; especially the former, the figures of which are varied, and very pretty. A singular circumstance at these entertainments is, that they are in a manner open to the public; wherever music is heard, persons uninvited make no scruple of walking in and viewing the entertainments; far from being molested they

are allowed to take their stations with the bidden guests!

17*th July.* A gentleman who arrived to-day from Carthagena, speaks of that town as being healthy and well-built; its site, a neck of land stretching out to sea, enjoying almost constant sea breezes; it has a good port, and cheerful society; but its greatest drawback is, a scarcity of water, that which is used being collected and kept in large tanks. He had lately been at Mexico, which he described to be a superb city, containing 120,000 inhabitants; it is distant only ten days journey from Vera Cruz, and twelve from Tampico—a good road connecting these ports with the capital; the coast is dangerous to anchor on, and very unhealthy, owing to stagnant waters and extensive forests.

1*st August.* A schooner came in to-day, in which I have engaged a passage to Kingston; and, I trust, I shall soon have the pleasure of being with you.

I am, &c.

J. Haddon, Printer, Tabernacle Walk.

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